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THE CORNHILL



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MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

	PAGE
EDITORIAL NOTE.. .. .	92
RUSKIN: THE MIDDLE YEARS (With illustrations) by Peter Quennell	93
1848 by H. R. Trevor-Roper	109
THREE T'ANG STORIES (Translated by Arthur Waley)	118
FLAUBERT'S SUNDAYS: MAUPASSANT AND HENRY JAMES by Francis Steegmuller	124
THE TROUT STREAM by Denton Welch	131
FOUR SONGS OF THE ITALIAN EARTH by Osbert Sitwell	155
TO MARK TIME.. .. . by Anne Ridler	158
THE SARACEN'S HEAD (With illustrations) by Osbert Lancaster	159

JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

*'The heavens rejoyce in motion, why should I
Abjure my so much lov'd variety . . . ?'*

are lines that we have often contemplated inscribing on the front page of the CORNHILL. Our policy is to have no policy: to print nothing that we do not ourselves admire, but to refuse no contribution that, in our considered view, possesses genuine literary merit. Naturally we welcome new departures; and, although hitherto we have avoided serial fiction, in this issue we are delighted to be able to publish the first instalment of Osbert Lancaster's illustrated historical novel, *The Saracen's Head*, or *The Reluctant Crusader*, a narrative that strikes us as both elevating and entertaining—as a pleasant contrast, moreover, to the type of historical romance recently poured out from transatlantic workshops. Originally intended for the schoolroom, we believe that it will make a strong appeal to the thoughtful adult public—especially in those London clubs of which the author is a member.

[The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.

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Ruskin : The Middle Years

BY PETER QUENNELL

True to his determination that his friends should find him 'neither . . . subdued, nor changed' by Effie's disappearance, and that towards the hostile and inquisitive public he must continue to present an attitude of cool, unruffled dignity, Ruskin, as he had previously planned, crossed the Channel with his parents in May 1854, and remained abroad, quietly and commendably occupied, till the following September. No word of remorse or recrimination, no Byronic apostrophe to an unworthy wife, was uttered from the packet-boat. The voyage would seem to have been smooth and pleasant ; for on deck Ruskin noted with enthusiasm the interesting curve of the ancient vessel's stay-sail, and sat down to make the careful drawing which was afterwards engraved as frontispiece to the second volume of *Praeterita*. How fascinating was the world of nature, how absorbing the contemplation of man's ingenious handicraft ! At one moment, in the bows of the little steamer, as he watched the 'magical division of the green waves between Dover and Calais,' it was a scrap of weather-worn sail-cloth, patched and seamed and stained, 'warped like a piece of wetted paper,' that caught and fixed his interest. But no sooner had he set foot on dry land than the tower of Calais Church, a familiar, friendly sentinel, rose delightfully before him ; and that, too, proved an imaginative outlet, first stimulating his sensuous appreciation of colour, mass and texture, then bringing a comforting suggestion of some underlying moral import. For not only 'the large neglect, the noble unsightliness' of the venerable building had to be considered—its stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea grasses ; its slates and tiles all shaken and rent . . . ; its desert of brickwork full of bolts, and holes, and ugly fissures, and yet strong, like a bare brown rock.' But its unpretending gravity and solidity of demeanour also claimed attention—its carelessness of what anyone thinks or feels about it, putting forth no claim, having no beauty or desirableness, pride, nor grace . . . ; not, as ruins are, useless and piteous, feebly or fondly garrulous of better days ; but useful still, going through its own daily work . . . in blanched and meagre massive-

ness and serviceableness . . . the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents ; and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea . . . above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore . . .'

Here, as elsewhere, Ruskin's processes of thought and methods of criticism are not entirely straightforward. His imagination fastened on the old tower almost as affectionately and greedily as it had fastened on St. Mark's church ; but that it was ' beautiful ' he felt obliged to deny, and concentrated instead upon its underlying symbolism. Indeed, Ruskin's critical approach, though directed and sustained by an acute intellect, was not primarily intellectual. It is in his ability to convey the keenness of his own sensations, the exquisiteness of his own adventures among landscapes, pictures, monuments, rather than in his attempts to explain why he felt as he did or to rationalise the pleasure he was half ashamed of feeling, that we recognise most clearly the operations of his genius. Ruskin himself, though he clung to the rôle of teacher, was prepared to admit that the conclusions he reached were sometimes inconsistent ; and with the strain of feminine sophistry that very often characterised him—more especially when he apprehended that unfair and uncharitable efforts were being made to pin him down—he elaborated a theory, designed to explain why he had every right, should he choose to do so, to enunciate with equal zest two conflicting propositions, and proceeded to support it with the evidence of Holy Writ. Than the Bible, one must perforce agree, few books appeared at first sight to contain more contradictory statements. One was enjoined to be humble and proud, violent and pacific. Yet, during the struggle which he still maintained to accept the sacred text uncritically and literally, Ruskin had noticed that, just as Mont Blanc was ' set between opposite fan-shaped strata,' so in the spiritual geology of the Bible ' two opposite groups of texts ' might enclose and uphold a central intermediate truth—an arrangement that, ' while it betrays the careless, rewards the faithful reader,' who, having been commanded to '*Rejoice evermore,*' and subsequently instructed, '*Blessed are they that mourn,*' achieves peace and certainty at last when he arrives at the central proposition : '*But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye.*'

With such authoritative backing, Ruskin did not hesitate to build up his critical edifices from as many opposing strata as the involutions of his argument momentarily suggested. The charge of self-contradiction was never one that vexed him, and latterly he was to declare that he meant henceforward ' to put my self contradictions in short sentences and direct terms, in order to save sagacious persons

the trouble of looking for them.' Whatever we may think of the theory of 'polygonal truth,' Ruskin, it is obvious, formed at times a far more accurate impression of the nature of his own talent than most of its admirers. He believed (he had written) that he had genius, though he was 'not clever' in the ordinary sense; but a 'strong instinct,' which he could not analyse, urged him to draw and describe, to assimilate into his own substance, the things he loved and valued. Thus his prose-style is living and captivating so long as he is content to record his 'progressions of discovery,' variations of feeling and 'oscillations of temper'—for his immediate response, whether to a work of art or a landscape, is always refreshing, if at times misleading—but loses its freshness when he endeavours to produce a system in which varying and contradictory moods are to be unified and reconciled. His next major work, the three concluding volumes of *Modern Painters* (on the first of which he had already embarked as soon as he reached Vevay), was destined to illustrate both aspects of Ruskin's literary temperament. The opening chapters are alike prosaic and pedantic. Lengthily and unprofitably the critic debates with the spectre of Sir Joshua Reynolds; heavy are the sarcasms with which he overwhelms it; and to little purpose does he consider and re-consider the essential qualities of the 'Grand style.' Not that Ruskin's criticism, whatever subject he is discussing, lacks many brilliant flashes; but the flashes are usually unrelated, while the examples of his own taste with which he points his thesis (and which include an admiring preference for 'Hunt's great poetical picture of the Light of the World') are frequently perplexing. Yet, only a page or two before his eulogy of Hunt, he has devoted a long, characteristic and splendid passage to the magnificent but wholly un-Christian visions of Paolo Veronese (representative of a period in Venetian art that he had chosen elsewhere to stigmatise as morally corrupt and pictorially decadent) and leaves the ground with a triumphant sweep, casting behind in his flight the lingering traces of pedantry and prepossession, transported by the remembered enjoyment of some gigantic sunny masterpiece.

Here he is attempting to share his pleasure—perhaps for no better reason than that to share or communicate any delight is almost always to increase it. Ruskin's was a naturally withdrawn spirit; yet, like many lonely and self-centred men, he never ceased to hanker after that easy, spontaneous communion with his fellow human beings from which his character and upbringing inevitably debarred him. Two factors, as the years went by, tended to encourage his prophetic tendency and to weaken the harmonising

influence that might, in happier circumstances, have been exerted by the artist. There was the sense of frustration which he experienced when he observed the complete failure of his efforts to bridge the gulf between himself and mankind: people read and applauded his books, but he remained as solitary as ever, while the world was growing visibly an uglier, more unhappy place. And there was the sense of personal unworthiness, which made him doubt whether he had any right to enjoy, and caused him to suspect every form of enjoyment until he had proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that it was ultimately derived from his appreciation of a moral truth. In writing alone did these conflicting aspects of his nature—the proud and the humble, the receptively sensuous and the aggressively didactic—find a brief appeasement. He began to write on a surge of enthusiasm; and the conception of a new book was usually prefaced by a glow of moral well-being. Doubt deserted him, and guilt released its hold. The sense of inherited superiority, which had been his when he was a child at Denmark Hill, came comfortably flooding back . . .

Thus, during the summer of 1854, at the moment of picking up the intricate thread, dropped ten years earlier, which was to lead at last to the conclusion of *Modern Painters* in 1860, Ruskin confessed to having received his 'third call from God,' the first having apparently occurred in 1841, when he discovered that he was destined to survive the disappointment of his love for Adèle Domecq, the second, it would seem, in 1845, again after a nervous illness, when a conviction that his prayers were answered suddenly descended on him. Each was the sign of a crisis surmounted. Now, as he climbed above Interlachen, reached the 'pure green pasture of the upper mountains' and saw 'the Jungfrau and the two Eigers . . . clear and soft in the intense mountain light,' while a 'field of silver cloud filled the valley above the lake of Brienz,' he 'stood long, praying that these happy hours and holy sights might be of more use to me than they have been, and might be remembered by me in hours of temptation or mortification.' The 'call,' however, which came, he tells us, 'in answer to much distressful prayer,' was not heard till July 2nd, the third Sunday after Trinity. It left him strengthened and uplifted. He was (he wrote from Sallanches on August 13th) 'stronger in health, higher in hope, deeper in peace, than I have been for years . . . I cannot be thankful enough, nor happy enough.' The mood of spiritual illumination, in which every day he seemed to 'see further into nature, and into myself—and into futurity,' continued to support him throughout the summer-months, and was reflected by a letter

written to his friend, Lady Trevelyan, on the eve of his return home : ' I have got over my distress and darkness now, thank God (he remarked), and I am very full of plans, and promises, and hopes . . . I am rolling projects over and over in my head.' These plans denoted not only an influx of fresh hope but a general change of attitude. Hitherto, though he had appeared on lecture-platforms and, with one excuse or another, had often lectured the public through the medium of the printed word, he had had little experience of a life of action and had remained always at a cautious distance from the world of toil and poverty. Now he determined that the standard he had held up on high must be taken down into the market-place. It was not enough to lecture and write, no matter how graceful his prose or how forceful his exposition. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, those ardent young men, he must preach the gospel of true art and spread the light of a true faith with apostolic energy, devoting his time and talents and wealth not to the edification of a leisured few but to the instruction of the vast masses of laborious mankind, of whose habits and needs and problems he was as yet but dimly cognisant.

It was a courageous, if injudicious, resolve. He wished (he informed Lady Trevelyan) ' to give short lectures to about 200 at once in turn, of the sign-painters, and shop-decorators, and writing-masters, and upholsterers, and masons, and brick-makers, and glass-blowers, and pottery people, and young artists, and young men in general, and schoolmasters, and young ladies in general, and school-mistresses . . . ' The sign-painters and ' the younger ladies ' were to be taught to illuminate manuscripts in the correct mediaeval fashion ; for—a significant point—he was anxious to produce prayer-books ' all *written* again ' (with a somewhat altered liturgy), thus striking a first blow at the ' abominable art of printing ' which, together with gunpowder, was one of the great curses of the age and ' the root of all the mischief.' Meanwhile he proposed to ' lend out *Liber Studiorum* and Albert Dürers to everybody who wants them ; and to make copies of all fine thirteenth-century manuscripts, and lend *them* out—all for nothing, of course ; and to have a room where anybody can go in all day and always see *nothing* in it but what is *good* . . . and a black hole, where they shall see nothing but what is bad, filled with Claudes, and Sir Charles Barry's architecture . . . ' In addition to these extensive schemes, he would like to establish a ' little Academy of my own in all the manufacturing-towns, and to get the young artists—Pre-Raphaelite always—to help me,' besides an ' Academy exhibition, an opposition shop, where all the pictures shall be hung on the

line—in nice little rooms decorated in a Giottesque manner—and no bad pictures let in, and none good turned out . . .’

Ruskin's projects, in their entirety, were never fully realised ; but they formed a master-plan, subsequently enlarged, by which for several decades he was to regulate his public life. Little strongholds of enlightenment were to be set up here and there, preferably where the gloom of nineteenth-century England was heaviest and most oppressive, that is to say in the neighbourhood of the great industrial centres ; and each was to be stocked with cultural ammunition, including some of the exquisite objects he had himself collected. Meanwhile, by way of a preliminary exercise, having returned to London during October, he joined the so-called Working Men's College in Red Lion Square, which had been founded in 1851 by Frederick Denison Maurice, the Broad Churchman and celebrated social reformer, whose aim was to put some of the benefits of a higher education within the grasp of the skilled but semi-literate workman. He was followed by Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and a new adherent to the pre-Raphaelite gospel, Edward Burne-Jones. Rossetti taught the life class every Thursday evening, and Ruskin held a class devoted to landscape art and elementary draughtsmanship. His audiences certainly admired and respected, if they did not altogether understand, him. During recent years, the idea of popular education had been making rapid progress. Since the relatively prosperous 'fifties had succeeded to the fierce and hungry 'forties, the wave of revolutionary feeling, which culminated in the fiasco of 1848, had been replaced by the emergence of a more moderate and conciliatory spirit among the British labouring classes. Some of the subversive zeal of the early Trades Unionists had been diverted into schemes for co-operative self-help. The proletariat was to improve his status, not by direct political action, but by strenuous and patient efforts to raise his intellectual standards ; and simultaneously the upper and middle classes, relieved of the apprehensions that had beset them while the revolutionary happenings of 1848 were still a fresh and painful memory, were well pleased to reach down a helping hand and assist his upward progress, provided, of course, he did not endeavour to rise too violently or hurriedly. Such a mood had produced the Working Men's College, and brought Ruskin and his Pre-Raphaelite assistants, stepping out of their dreams of a splendid mediaeval past, to its crowded gas-lit class-rooms.

Ruskin's efforts there, as he moved to and fro among his pupils—so unlike them in his soberly elegant garb, the neutral tones of the frock-coat set off by a dandified blue neck-cloth : unlike them, too,

in the touch of irresponsible fantasy that he was accustomed to permit himself whenever he talked or lectured—were according to contemporary accounts equally unselfish and imaginative. How to explain something of the essential quality of great art, something of the unending beauty of the natural universe, to men exhausted by their day's work, who had been born, brought up and were to spend their lives in a labyrinthine wilderness of shabby bricks and mortar? Characteristic of Ruskin's philosophy was his belief that art was a form of language, which should appeal not only to the collector and the expert, but to the whole of humanity—if humanity could be persuaded to recover its pristine clarity of hearing. One must begin with the simplest principles; but, as soon as a small start had been made—for example, by interesting a sign-painter in thirteenth-century manuscripts, or teaching a journeyman stone-cutter to distinguish between good and bad detail—the movement might surely spread, till the artisans of Leeds and Liverpool were voicing their demands for Turners and Albert Dürers (readily supplied from Denmark Hill) and the inhabitants of London filing quietly and reverently through a succession of 'nice little rooms decorated in a Giottesque manner' and hung with the finest examples of modern English painting. What was needed was the initial impetus; nor did Ruskin, during the mid-fifties, seem seriously to have doubted that he could at length supply it. He had the knowledge: he had the material. And, a somewhat erratic *genie*, every week, month after month, he flitted down to Red Lion Square, his arms heaped with books and prints or precious mineral specimens, which he dispersed among his class, looking hopefully, if now and then a trifle wistfully, for the smallest sign of interest.

Sometimes the trophy would be a case of 'West Indian birds unstuffed . . . all rubies and emerald,' introduced so that his students might learn to despair of imitating natural colour; and sometimes he exhibited a Gothic missal and set them to counting the leaves in different sprays of foliage. For promising pupils he brought separate gifts: on one desk he would place a cairngorm pebble or fluor-spar in a tumbler of water, bidding his *protégé* 'trace their tangled veins of crimson and amethyst'; while 'lichen and fungi from Anerley Woods' were carefully chosen and picked for the edification of another. He would go to endless pains correcting sketches, and point out as he did so how and why the tree or rock that they were assumed to represent had acquired such and such a shape or leaned at such an angle. His lectures made an immediate impression: 'formless and planless as they were,

(we are told) the effect on the hearers was immense. It was a wonderful bubbling up of all manner of glowing thoughts . . . With the men he grew 'wildly popular'; and this was the more surprising since Ruskin, whose attitude towards the working-class was distinctly patriarchal, revealed himself as a severe critic of egalitarian theories. So his friends (he remarked to the assembled students) were 'all agape . . . for this mighty privilege of having your opinions represented in Parliament? The concession might be desirable . . . if only it were quite certain you had got any opinions to represent. But have you? Are you agreed on anything you systematically want? Less work and more wages, of course; but how much lessening of work do you suppose is possible? . . . Have you planned the permanent state which you wish England to hold? Do you want her to be nothing but a large workshop and forge . . .? or would you like to keep some of your lords and landed gentry still, and a few green fields and trees? . . . Your voices are not worth a rat's squeak . . . till you have some ideas to utter with them.'

In his political, as in his æsthetic, views, Ruskin had all the qualities, and some of the demerits, of the intellectual free-lance. Yet this most independent of theorists was also the dutiful son who, when his lecture was finished, must step into the carriage that would take him back to Denmark Hill, where his mother and father engrossed his affections and the haven that sheltered his childhood had been securely re-established. His own house had naturally been given up. He was home again, with the only two human beings of whose love he felt entirely sure, towards whom his allegiance could never change or waver. They exulted openly over their recaptured son; and old John Ruskin, whose discretion, once the interests of the family were involved, had at no time been conspicuous, declared to casual acquaintances that Effie was a wicked and designing woman, and had deliberately ensnared John (who 'might have married a French Countess'), adding in his characteristic style: 'Never mind, we shall have to pay for it, and we shall at least have John all to ourselves.' It was true, as regards his external life. In spirit (one may conjecture) he had never really left home: Effie, at first an absorbing passion, then a source of shame and disappointment, in the latter period of their relation a mere irritating obstacle, had now vanished like a drawing erased, a page torn from a note-book. Her fatal face would seem to have been wholly forgotten; and, although as long as he lived he continued to preserve the passionate letters she had inspired during their engagement, it may be that he had already invented,

and had begun to accept, the comforting legend that at no stage of their intercourse had he ever truly loved her.

The lover, for the moment, was banished or imprisoned. Instead, his friends who visited Denmark Hill saw a perfect son whom the old people had contrived to form, if not in their own image, certainly to their own satisfaction, for their own delight and credit. His background was by now luxurious: the large house was full of well-trained servants, carefully educated in their duties under Mrs. Ruskin's supervision, its walls 'glittering with pictures, chiefly Turners,' which the critic had chosen and the sherry-merchant paid for. Mr. Ruskin impressed a visitor as a very 'fine old gentleman,' with a comfortable manner, 'a lot of bushy grey hair, and eyebrows sticking up all rough . . .,' and a habit of singing John's praises heartily and loudly. As for Mrs. Ruskin, she was a 'ruddy, dignified, richly-dressed old gentlewoman'—clearly a 'good old lady, with the *Christian Treasury* tossing about on the table'—who held strong personal opinions and, much as she adored her offspring, sometimes contradicted him. Ruskin (noted the visitor) received 'all her opinions with a soft reverence and gentleness that is pleasant to witness . . .' In the lecture-room, or anywhere away from home, Ruskin could be, and indeed very often was, both abrupt and contradictory. But with his mother and father he was an entirely different being; and his admirer was pleased to remark a 'spiritual sweetness in the half-timid expression of his eyes . . .'

There was nothing timid, however, in the enthusiasm with which he showed and explained and re-arranged his pictures. He was constantly running up to his study to fetch a print or water-colour, removing a Turner from a distant wall and putting it in the visitor's hands; 'and so he kept on gliding all over the house, hanging and unhangings,' pausing now and then to talk with the same infectious eagerness. No man could have appeared livelier, none more fully occupied. His activities were varied and incessant; they increased as he advanced through middle-age, becoming at length so uncommonly numerous that in a study of modest length it is almost impossible to chart them. Between 1854 and 1860, besides lecturing at the Working Men's College and completing *Modern Painters* (for which he himself executed many highly finished drawings), he wrote a regular series of *Academy Notes* (which made and unmade the reputations of rising British artists and usually contained some judicious reference to Millais' latest products), was concerned in an advisory capacity with the erection of the new Museum at Oxford and, as Turner's executor, arranged and catalogued the

immense accumulation of sketches that, after the old painter's death on December 19th, 1851, had been discovered stacked up in his London house. The extinction of his 'earthly Master' had been for Ruskin a less severe blow than he had at first expected. He was (he told his father, who had sent the news to Venice) 'perhaps more relieved than distressed by it—though saddened. It will not affect my health, nor alter my arrangements.' He had deplored Turner's ultimate period and, dispensing with regrets for the dead, he now set to work to preserve that part of the great man's achievement which he believed to be immortal. It was by no means an easy task. Under the terms of a singularly perplexing will, Turner had appointed Ruskin one of his executors, bequeathed subject to conditions never subsequently honoured a vast hoard of pictures and drawings to the nation, and left much of the remainder of his property to establish a charitable institution for poor and aged artists. Legal proceedings followed his death; and not until 1856 was Ruskin allowed to begin putting the master's scattered remains into intelligible order.¹ By the time he had examined and sorted some nineteen thousand sketches, he seemed to experience (as he confided to his diary) ominous symptoms of an impending nervous breakdown.

Yet the danger passed. There was, at least, no serious interruption in the stream of his activities. He continued to lecture and gather his lectures into volumes; a course delivered at Manchester, for example, was printed as *The Political Economy of Art* (presently re-named *A Joy for Ever and its Price in the Market*), concerning which he afterwards observed that it was 'not very dull, and of all the books I have written . . . the only one I'm proud of.' Then his missionary spirit fastened upon architectural questions. Oxford was to have a scientific museum; his friend Acland had originally launched the scheme in 1847, and by 1854 it had received the approval of the University authorities. The problem of finding an appropriate style for this important edifice provoked, in Oxford and elsewhere, a resounding controversial hubbub. At the turn of the century such arguments were numerous and impassioned. Its architecture expresses the pride of a race; and, far ahead of their commercial competitors, growing every day both in material stability and a sense of moral dignity, the mid-Victorians felt an intense concern, if not always with the interior design of their buildings or the inward structure of society, at least with the imposing *façade* presented to an onlooker. Should the *façade* be Gothic or

¹ There appears to be no basis for the story that Ruskin destroyed some of Turner's sketches of tavern and brothel scenes.

Classical? Thus, from 1857 onwards, the submission of plans for a new Foreign Office was to arouse tremendous interest. Gilbert Scott prevailed with a Gothic plan; but Lord Palmerston, who had suddenly returned to power, in his 'light, airy and cheerful style,' dismissed the Scott's romantic project as dark, inconvenient and Jesuitical; at which the *Daily Telegraph* loudly rejoiced over the presumed discomfiture of Mr. Ruskin, 'that architectural imperator,' and the check administered to 'mitre and crozier architects who would convert a public office into a sanctuary loaded with carvings and brasswork, lit by fantastic windows, and expensive without being commodious.' But at Oxford Gothic had triumphed after a long and strenuous campaign—'Veronese Gothic of the best and manliest type, in a new and striking combination,' as Acland's biographer enthusiastically described it. Ruskin was delighted with his friend's success, of which he learned by telegram. He was 'going to thank God for it and lie down to sleep (he wrote at once to Acland). The Museum in your hands . . . will be the root of as much good to others as I suppose it is rational for any single living soul to hope to do in its earth-time.' Corresponding, so accurately to Ruskin's own peculiar blend of interests, and symbolising (as it might certainly be taken to do) the harmonious fusion of the modern and the ancient worlds, the idea of a scientific museum housed in a Gothic shell was bound to captivate and hold him. Here, surely, were glimmerings of a real Renaissance? In defiance of cold Palladian precepts, of the soulless uniformity and depressing symmetry of neo-classic architecture, the Museum should be a monument to man at his most spiritual and a testimony, by the grace of God, to his communal creative efforts. It was to be the masterpiece of a band of happy labourers, working together upon a single selfless impulse, blithe and pure of heart, like the cathedral-builders of the Middle Ages.

This happy band was recruited from Ireland, where they had previously been employed by the architect, Benjamin Woodward, about the decoration of the new Engineering School of Trinity College, Dublin, a building in the Venetian-Byzantine style, of which Ruskin was to declare that it had given him, for the first time, the joy of seeing his æsthetic principles carried into practice. All good design (Ruskin was fond of repeating) must be based upon Organic Form, upon the close and reverent observation of the natural world around us—a precept of particular value to architectural masons, for whose benefit he elaborated his convictions in one of the public addresses collected in *The Two Paths*:

From visions of angles [he exclaimed, with a characteristic surge of wide and gusty eloquence], down to the least important gesture of a child at play, whatever may be conceived of Divine, or beheld of Human, may be dared or adopted by you ; throughout the kingdom of animal life, no creature is so vast, or so minute, that you cannot deal with it, or bring it into service ; the lion and the crocodile will couch about your shafts ; the moth and the bee will sun themselves upon your flowers ; for you, the fawn will leap ; for you, the snail be slow ; for you, the dove smooth her bosom, and the hawk spread her wings toward the south. All the wide world of vegetation blooms and bends for you ; the leaves tremble that you may bid them be still under the marble snow ; the thorn and the thistle . . . are to you the kindest servants . . .

Ruskin's dream had been partially realised in the ornamentation of the school that Woodward—soon one of his 'truest and most loving friends,' and 'one of the most earnest souls that ever gave itself to the arts'—planned and executed for Trinity College. Glowing 'eyes of coloured stone' were inset in the fabric ; and the edifice was further embellished by the addition of 'numberless capitals delicately carved over (a contemporary admirer noted) with holly-leaves, shamrocks, various flowers, birds, and so on.' Dublin having set the example, Oxford must not be backward ; and Ruskin decided that he would endeavour to enlist the support of the more prominent Pre-Raphaelites. Why not Millais as well as the others ? He hoped (he told Acland) 'to be able to get Millais and Rossetti to design flower and beast borders—crocodiles and various vermin—such as you are particularly fond of . . . and we will carve and inlay them with Cornish serpentine all about your windows . . . such capitals as we will have !' Millais—rather unexpectedly, since as a general rule he failed to recognise the fine distinction Ruskin drew between the public and the private life—would appear to have produced a design of field-mice nibbling wheat ears ; but Rossetti, notwithstanding his brilliant gifts an idle and procrastinatory personage, was of no help to Woodward's assistants, though his *protégée*, Elizabeth Siddal, made 'some lovely designs,' one of which was carried out—'an angel with some children and all manner of other things . . .' Ruskin himself designed a variety of details, including a whole ogival window, and by his own unaided efforts constructed an entire brickwork column. He was at the time staying near Oxford, 'in a farmhouse in the middle of a field,' surrounded by a garden full of gooseberries and orange lilies ; and, with Acland as his tutor, he had started to learn bricklaying ; for 'half my power (he wrote) of ascertaining facts

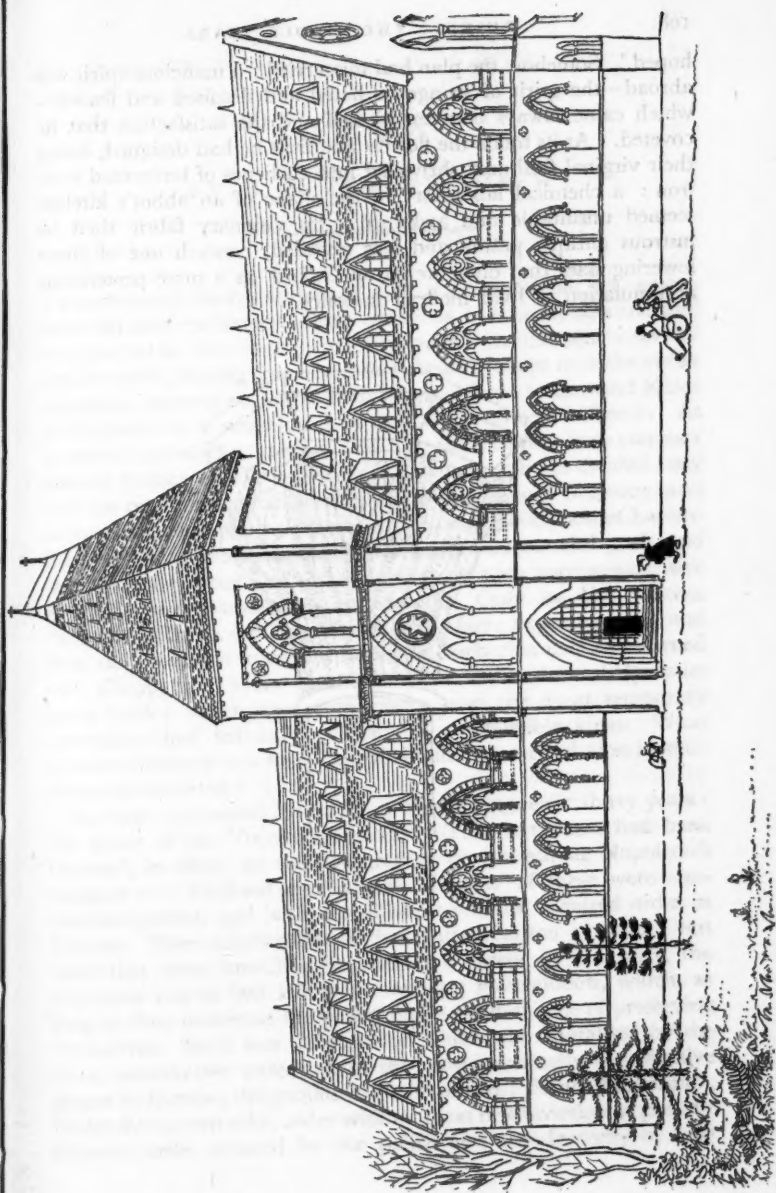
of any kind connected with the arts, is in my stern habit of doing the thing with my own hands till I know its difficulty.'

In this respect—as indeed in most respects—he differed from Rossetti, who, having visited Oxford during the summer of 1857 to inspect the new Museum, was so deeply impressed by the architectural charm of another of Woodward's achievements, the new Union building, that he offered to decorate the interior of the Debating Hall (nowadays the Library) and without more ado enlisted the services of seven friends, among them William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, all more or less Pre-Raphaelite, all brimming over with love of art and devotion to the Middle Ages. The story, often told, of their heroic but futile labours is equally saddening and diverting. Damp bricks, thinly distempered, declined to accept the vivid incrustation of paint with which Pre-Raphaelite brushes strove to overlay them. The eight young artists had none of Ruskin's grasp of the practical difficulties inherent in every real creative problem; and their dream-like projection of the *Morte d'Arthur* faded like a dream, as swiftly and inconsequently. Meanwhile the Venetian Gothic Union building, and the hushed streets of summer-time Oxford, resounded to their merriment. 'What fun we had! . . .' (one of them remembered) 'What jokes! What roars of laughter!' Ruskin was appreciative, but a little dubious. He admired the Pre-Raphaelite zeal: he never quite learned to participate in the Pre-Raphaelite sense of humour, which ran to nick-names and preposterous buffooneries, and led them to diversify a serious composition by slipping in, as the fancy took them, a caricature of Morris or a playful sketch of Rossetti's favourite animal, the 'obtuse and furry' wombat. 'You know' (he complained to William Rossetti), 'the fact is they're all the least bit crazy, and it's very difficult to manage them.' Meanwhile the Museum arose; and there, too, some of the artists concerned proved incapable of management. The Irish masons, headed by two brothers named O'Shea, both handsome and both red-bearded, were genial and sympathetic but excessively temperamental. From the Botanic Garden they would bring bouquets of flowers and foliage which they translated into sculpture, thus exemplifying Ruskin's doctrine of Organic Form at its purest and correctest; but, perhaps under the spell of Ruskin's evening addresses delivered at the workmen's institute, they also launched into the animal kingdom and disturbed Members of Convocation by portraying parrots, owls and monkeys. 'The unnecessary introduction of cats' was observed by University critics, and voted frivolous and scandalous. O'Shea would rush into Acland's house,

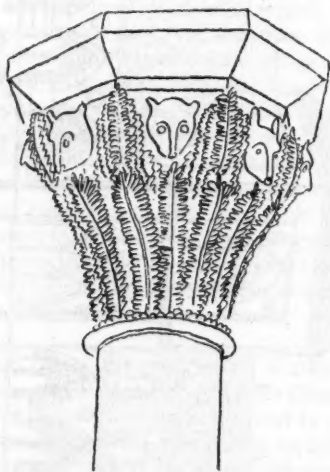
half demented with Hibernian cholor, having been discovered in the production of monkeys and ordered from his scaffold by some angrily squeaking don . . .

Yet the project continued to develop—not as Thebes grew to the sound of Amphion's lyre, but encouraged at every stage by the circulation of Ruskin's quickening influence. He counselled: he admonished: he gave without stint of his interest, time and money. Between 1855 and 1859, the vision he shared with Acland and Woodward gradually materialised. Over the main entry of this shrine of learning, an angel displayed in his right hand the open Book of Nature, while in his left he supported a cluster of 'three living cells,' symbolic (it was understood) of Life's mysterious origins. Within an imposing quadrangular hall, columns of cast iron soared up towards the glass roof, bursting, as they completed their ascent, into a wealth of wrought-iron foliage. Organic Form again predominated; arching over the student's head were spandrels twisted into the shape of interwoven forest-boughs; the angularity of brackets and girders was softened by the profusion of leaves and blossoms and fruit that had somehow curled among them. Here were the elm, the holly, the briar, the passion-flower and the water-lily. In the main court, with its double arcade, polished shafts of stone (chosen by the Professor of Geology as representative specimens of the principal British rocks) had capitals and bases entwined with the forms of numerous plants and animals, disposed in a manner at once æsthetically pleasing and scientifically enlightening.

A year before the Museum's completion, Ruskin's efforts were rewarded by an Honorary studentship at Christ Church. It was an acknowledgment that pleased him much; and in 1859, when the new building was finally opened to the public, he helped to prepare an explanatory booklet entitled *The Oxford Museum*, in which he himself defended its Gothic plan and elucidated the system adopted by its decorators. A notable task nobly performed. And yet—across the happiness that he felt, or that he should have felt, there crept a lengthening shadow. The intention had been good, the execution honest. He had been stimulated by the task on hand: now that it was finished and he could at last stand back, so sensitive a lover of the best in art must needs admit that the Oxford Museum, as it had risen, was not entirely beautiful. He did not see it, let us piously suppose, even for a second of horrible illumination, in all its true alarming ugliness. But he was obliged to confess—after Woodward's early death of consumption in 1861—that the building had, from some points of view, 'failed signally of being what he



hoped.' Somehow the plan had miscarried ; a malicious spirit was abroad—the spirit of an age he hated and despised and feared—which came always between himself and the satisfaction that he coveted. At its touch the flowers and fruit he had designed, losing their virginal freshness, shrivelled into curlicues of tormented cast-iron : a chemical laboratory in the shape of an abbot's kitchen seemed unsuitable and awkward : his visionary fabric shed its lustrous antique patina and was revealed, beneath one of those lowering skies that often weigh on Oxford, as a mere pretentious accumulation of livid modern masonry.



1848

BY H. R. TREVOR-ROPER

To understand the revolutions of 1848, it has been said, is to understand all modern history, whose essence is, as it were, concentrated and bottled in that single climacteric year. In that year a revolutionary spirit, issuing from Paris in February, swept over the entire continent, causing an Emperor to resign, a Pope to flee, and Kings to abdicate, or to abandon their capitals, or to bow before it. As it moved eastward, it moved over different societies, from compact unitary France with its new middle-class monarchy to divided Italy and the timorous centrifugal despotisms of still rural Germany, and so into that yet more complex area, the racial rock-pools of Eastern Europe, where every tide of invasion has left its casual deposit, and the changing pattern of the surface at no time corresponds with the formations submerged beneath it. Only on the western frontier of Russia did the revolutionary force expend itself; and then the backwash from that immobile barbarian empire returned over Europe: to every throne save one the frightened dynasties came back; order seemed restored; and the great temporary convulsion had left only a legacy of combustible ideas. What common features can have caused simultaneous revolution in such dissimilar societies?

In 1848 continental Europe had been at peace for thirty years: the peace of the Vienna Settlement. That settlement had been imposed, in effect, by the two greatest powers among Napoleon's conquerors: England and Russia. Neither of these were continental powers, and both, for different reasons, required order in Europe. They might differ in their interpretation of order; but since they were unwilling to intervene, except in extremity, the continent was in fact left to the existing governments, which, so long as they preserved the peace, had a good chance of preserving themselves. Such was the situation which was capitalised by the most conservative statesman of the most necessarily conservative power in Europe, the godfather of the period: Prince Metternich. Order for its own sake, order without ideas or conviction or positive support, order secured by the police and the dexterity of long

practice—such seemed the policy of Metternich in Europe ; and whatever the differences of discontent—whether the political discontent of the unenfranchised middle classes, or the romantic discontent of frustrated intellectuals, or the social discontent of an urban proletariat, or the agrarian discontent of exploited peasants, or the racial discontent of repressed minorities—all discontent seemed at first united, for it was all directed at the Metternich system.

But if the discontented of Europe knew what they hated, did they know what they wanted ? There were many who thought that they did. The last great revolutionary flood had been the flood of the French Revolution and Empire. That flood had brought war and its consequences : loss of life and property, economic ruin, war-taxation, a new despotism. But after thirty years of the Metternich system these had been forgotten or romanticised, and other legacies were remembered instead : the emancipation of the peasants, the freeing of serfs, the modernisation of law, the widening of opportunity, the simplification of Germany, the unity of Italy, and (by the Jews) the emancipation of the Jews. A German publicist once called the Revolutions of 1848 *Napoleonismus ohne Napoleon*, a Napoleonism without a Napoleon. It was also a French Revolution without revolutionaries. The greatest of contemporary observers remarked how the new revolutionaries aped every gesture and antic of the old, used their slogans and their costumes, and yet failed altogether to understand their spirit or purpose. Borrowed from France, and from France of 1789, the revolutions of 1848 were to a large extent reach-me-down revolutions ; and reach-me-down revolutions do not succeed.

Such was the intellectual background ; but to cause revolution social discontent is also required. In the last years of the Metternich system a series of economic disasters gave solid substance to these intellectual longings. Blight and bad harvests shook the rural economy of Europe in 1845 and 1846, driving the peasantry into debt and raising the cost of food in the towns. At the same time an economic crisis rolled outward from England, ruining the small tradesmen. This crisis in the greatest industrial and commercial power of the time (itself secure from the revolution) was singled out by Marx as the immediate cause of the crisis in France, where the ruling oligarchy of great financiers survived in invidious immunity above the flood. Today the disciples of Marx again look forward to a similar crisis of overproduction in the industrial colossus of our time, America, to precipitate their centenary revolution.

Thus already before 1848 a revolutionary situation existed, and

the watchers in European capitals could see many premonitory symptoms of the storm. How did they prepare for it? Their behaviour vividly illustrates the degeneration of political intelligence in the long period of reaction. The rulers of Europe, as in 1938, trembled in advance, and being unwilling to resist, they seemed unwilling to admit the impending cataclysm. To them it was just another political turn, from which some immediate advantage might cleverly be snatched. In France the enemies of Guizot sought to insert themselves skilfully in his place; in Prussia the Junkers hoped to exploit constitutional pretences; in Austria the enemies of Metternich whispered in Hapsburg ears, and were heard. One man at least thought boldly and spoke clearly. Alexis de Tocqueville was a liberal aristocrat whose vision was sharpened by isolation from usual categories. Less than a month before the Paris revolution he warned the Chamber of Deputies that if the lower classes seemed politically quiet, it was because 'their passions, from political, have become social': social revolution was at hand. His speech was regarded as merely the customary rhetoric, and excited only mocking laughter. The 'opposition dynastique,' in their intrigue for power under Louis-Philippe, took the risk of appealing to the streets; the streets responded with riots; the King fled in panic to England; and the spark that had been lit in Paris enflamed the combustible air of Metternich's Empire beyond the Rhine.

In Vienna the revolution began similarly with intrigue and ended similarly in surrender to panic. Within a month of the flight of Louis-Philippe, Metternich was listening at his Chancellery window to the angry buzz of the multitude below. 'What is that noise?' demanded a frightened archduke. 'That,' replied the statesman of legitimacy, 'is what our republican friends call the Voice of God'; and he too fled to England. The morale of government had collapsed, not through overwhelming defeat, but internal rottenness; and in the period of collapse the court yielded to every force, every claim, every provincial revolt against the enfeebled system. Revolt in Vienna was followed by revolt in Italy, in Hungary, in Bohemia; and each revolt, though different, met the same compliancy. In Italy the Austrian general was told not to resist, and provinces were signed away; in Hungary the Emperor approved a separate, intolerant Magyar state; in Bohemia the new Czech nationalism sought expression in a Slav Congress. In May the imperial court, having bowed to every storm and renounced the historic provinces of its Empire, fled from Vienna to the Tyrol.

From Vienna the revolution rolled outwards to the subsidiary capitals of Metternich's system. In Rome and Berlin the rulers did not yet flee: they sought to head the movement which threatened their overthrow. The new pope had already proclaimed himself a liberal and was attempting to govern through a reforming ministry. The eccentric, romantic light-headed King of Prussia lost his nerve and pretended to be a German nationalist. Since the old centres of authority had thus collapsed, the nationalist revolutionaries sought a new. They set up a Parliament in Frankfurt, and there met to give Germany a government, and to execute those national and liberal policies which had seemed so easy when the cosmopolitan autocracy of Metternich had made them safely impossible.

Thus throughout Europe the old governments had abdicated without a struggle; and the new political leaders, who had unloosed social and national forces to secure power, found themselves suddenly in power, with the responsibility of exercising it. Who were these leaders, and what were they to do?

They were professional men, of the middle classes, educated and humane men, traditionally liberal, who had learnt their liberalism without questioning those social privileges which had enabled them to acquire it. In politics their liberalism made them revolutionary; but society they took for granted. Unfortunately there is no such thing as merely political revolution. Every revolutionary party must ultimately rest on a social basis, and if it does not already possess one, it must acquire one. It may assume a new basis, and thereby carry out a social revolution, or it may revert to the former basis and cease to be revolutionary; but to remain in power without such a basis is impossible. At a critical moment, therefore, after the seizure of power, a choice must be made; and such a choice demands a systematic political philosophy, thought out in advance, tested by experience, ready for use. Courage is only a temporary substitute: virtue is none. Such a philosophy the revolutionaries of 1848 lacked. When the moment of decision came they were unready. Had they had to struggle for power, they might have cleared their minds in the struggle; but since there had been no struggle, they were landed with responsibility for which they were not ready, and embarrassed by allies whom they had called into battle but had not needed to use. Faced by social revolution, they either retreated, or abdicated, or by continuing to take themselves seriously became ridiculous.

What was this social revolution which followed the political revolutions in the summer of 1848? It varied, of course, in the European diversity. Here it was urban and industrial, there

rural and agrarian. In Paris (the hugest city of the Continent), in Vienna, Berlin, and the great Italian cities, unrepresented masses could voice an urban discontent ; but outside those great centres the opposite clamours of the peasantry alarmed the new governments, or could be exploited by the old. Throughout the early months of 1848 peasants rioted in rural Germany and Austria. The political revolutionaries in the capitals were afraid of such disorders : they either appealed to the old forces of order to suppress them (as in Germany), and thus became the tools of reaction, or, by satisfying their demands, weakened the basis of their own revolution. In Austria the peasants, by their numbers in the revolutionary assembly, gained emancipation from feudal burdens ; thenceforth they became conservative and could be used by the old ruling classes, when they had recovered their nerve, to crush the radicalism of the towns.

So it happened in Paris and, with variations, in other revolutionary capitals. The French political revolutionaries were abler, less romantic than their German parallels—for France had a less precarious middle-class ; but they too lacked a social basis, or the courage to seize it, and were gradually overwhelmed by their former allies of the Left. In vain they sought to contain the Paris proletariat by economically pointless public works. The cost fell on the peasants, and the peasants, already conservative (for they had been emancipated by the great Revolution) became counter-revolutionary. The revolutionary device of universal suffrage brought their voices into politics, and enabled them to crush the Red dictatorship of the June days in Paris, and introduce a new dictatorship of order.

Of course it was not only the peasants whom urban radicalism frightened into conservatism. The middle and professional classes whose standards depended on order, the tradesmen who, in the small capitals, had lived on the now fugitive courts, the politically neutral who at first had not stirred—all these were terrified of real social change. Nationalism, too, worked both ways. If Austrian Germans and Hungarians used it to assert their rights against the dynasty, Czechs and Slovenes would appeal for imperial protection against such new, illiberal masters, and pay for it with their support. First in Prague, then in Vienna, social radicalism drove the original revolutionaries back to political conservatism ; the court, free to manœuvre in Innsbrück or Olmütz, recovered its nerve ; and a new Emperor, with new and more resolute advisers, new support from subject races, and foreign aid, began the military reconquest of his empire. In Italy the Pope soon realised the difference

between artificial political liberalism and the radicalism of Roman demagogues. He fled from his capital, and waited to be restored, finally cured of all liberal notions, by foreign arms. In Prussia the King recovered his nerve and his capital, as he had lost them, without the need of force. And the Frankfurt Parliament, which had only flourished in the abeyance of Vienna and Berlin, having used its forces to crush a radical rising in the city, abandoned its crusading slogans, handed over its nationalist policy to stronger exponents, and disappeared.

Thus the revolutions of 1848 collapsed within a year because the political revolutionaries were too academic: they had not thought out their philosophy or their programme, and having profited by the unexpected collapse of their enemies, were unable to fill so great and sudden a void. There is something tragic in the contrast between the vastness of their claims and opportunities and the inadequacy of the men who failed to respond to it. But why was everything over so quickly? In the seventeenth century such a complexity of passions and interests embroiled Europe for thirty years; this was over in a year. Why did the revolutionary situation lead to no general war? The answer lies in the policy of the great non-European powers, who wished for peace, and in chance, which enabled them to maintain it. Palmerston, who directed English policy, was not an ideologue. If he wanted liberalism, it was for its rational advantages, not its slogans; and his realistic policy in Austria and Italy, and the fortunate restraint of both the new France and the old Russia, caused each revolution to work itself out within its own boundaries, with the minimum of foreign intervention. The result was not a victory for constitutional ideas; but there is little reason to suppose that the success of German nationalists or Hungarian gentry would have been one either.

Why then is 1848 so important? It is important not for the events which occurred in that abortive year, nor even for the finality of defeat: for many problems then left unsolved have been worked out on a smaller basis in the succeeding century. It is important for the legacy, and particularly the legacy of ideas, which it left behind. Great failures provoke thought, and almost all the political ideas of the last century were either hammered out in the revolutionary year, or based on its experiences. If liberal politicians with liberal ideas had failed to secure not only the liberal institutions which some of them valued but also the national unity and social changes which were more widely demanded, then it seemed clear that these things must be achieved by other less

liberal methods. After 1848 the revolutionaries of Europe faced the problems which a romantic and muddled generation had shelved: the problems of social change and the basis of power; and in continental thought the ideals of socialist dictatorship and nationalist dictatorship replaced the liberal ideals which had proved so fragile. Only in England did the philosophical basis of socialism remain liberal; and England had been exempt from the revolution of 1848.

That the doctrines of continental socialism date from 1848 hardly needs to be emphasised, for it was in that year that Marx and Engels published their challenge to the world, *The Communist Manifesto*. *The Communist Manifesto* was independent of the revolutions—it was published before the revolution broke out in Paris—but it was a direct response to the same conditions which caused them, an alternative to the liberal programme. When the liberal programme had failed, the untested Marxist programme became the residuary legatee of the revolutionary spirit. Ultimately it has succeeded; but there is no reason to suppose that it was any more appropriate to the conditions of 1848 than the liberalism which it has since eclipsed. For Marxism, as Marx himself pointed out, depends on industrialisation, on the presence of an undifferentiated urban proletariat such as existed in England and in Paris (where Marx had evolved his theory), but not yet in rural Germany. And yet it was of Germany that Marx was thinking, not of international socialism; primarily he was less a socialist than a German nationalist—as anyone must realise who reads his diatribes against the Czechs and the Poles—dying peoples only fit to survive as part of Germany. After 1848 Germany became rapidly industrialised, and the Marxist formula at last became applicable; but here again the events of 1848 led the German Marxists astray. In 1848 the revolution was crushed, at least in part, by the opposition or desertion of the peasants, and the German Marxists assumed that the peasantry would remain incurably conservative. In fact the only country where communism was established from within was the country where the peasants were won over to the revolution; and now that it is Russian, not German, communism which is being worked out in Europe, the peasantry are being wooed as never before since 1848.

Of the origins of nationalist dictatorship in 1848 less is usually said, for these doctrines had no such manifesto. Nevertheless they are there, and not difficult to find. When the enemies of any despotism fail, uttering the word 'Liberty,' there is no obvious means of showing what in fact they mean by that useful abstrac-

tion, and they are usually credited with its noblest interpretation. This is a charitable, but not necessarily a safe custom, and the history of 1848 suggests that in this case it is unwise. The triumvirs of the Roman Republic in that year included Garibaldi, its hero, and Mazzini, its philosopher. Mazzini's philosophy demanded the rejection of utilitarian criteria, the suppression of 'false' theories, and the denial of the will of the people whenever it did not conform with the 'divine plan' of which he was the sole interpreter. As Bertrand Russell has observed, 'these doctrines have been accepted and carried out by Mussolini.' Of Garibaldi it is perhaps unnecessary to speak. He was less intellectual. He believed that everything was justified to him who wore a red shirt and shouted 'Viva Italia!' Nor were the leaders of German liberalism much more liberal when they dealt with other nations. The Frankfurt Parliament was a liberal assembly, and its members were undoubtedly 'good' Germans. In the early days, before they had been forced to sort out their virtuous but confused ideas, they expressed many sympathetic sentiments about the oppression of Poland under Prussian and Russian rule. But events soon forced them to think more clearly. In the name of 'healthy national egoism' they 'moderated their virtuous zeal for Poland'; and declared that Poland had no rights except such as were allowed by German magnanimity. On all three frontiers—in Slesvig, in Bohemia, and in Poland—these liberal nationalists demanded not liberty but annexation, and annexation, when necessary, by the Prussian royal army. It is sometimes difficult to say whether the Nazis were the barbarian conquerors, or the legitimate heirs of the 'liberal nationalists' of 1848.

And what of France? There alone the revolution was not entirely reversed—for the dynasty was not restored, and some at least of the new forces obtained a lodgement. In France, the only true home and source of the Revolution, the *Napoleonismus* found its Napoleon, *Napoleon le Petit*. That strange figure, who rose to power without a policy, relying only on the mystique of a name, and kept it by *coup d'état*, illusory plebiscites, and a series of inconsistent and ultimately fatal expedients, is history's standing proof that not all who achieve revolutionary power are thereby to be judged worthy of it. 'I believe,' says de Tocqueville (after describing his opaque, visionary eyes, his belief in Providence, of which he conceived himself the instrument, and the streak of madness mingled with his peasant shrewdness), 'that his inferiority in conversation made intelligent company distasteful to him. What he required, above all, was devotion to his person and his cause . . . merit he disliked,

for all his dependence. He claimed only blind believers in his star, vulgar worshippers of his fortune.' Once again, we can see the twentieth century presaged in the consequences of 1848.

Finally, in Eastern Europe an idea was born in 1848 which, after the failure of many experiments, has at last been realised. Neither nationalism nor liberalism could ultimately serve the Slavonic peasantry of the Danubian lands, to whom even Hapsburg landlords were the least of evils. At the Slav Congress in Prague, the Czech liberal, Palacky, declared his philosophy: that the dynasty alone could protect the Slavs against intolerant German nationalism—for the dynasty at least could be liberalised, as the German nationalists could never be; 'therefore, if the Austrian Empire did not exist, in the interest of Europe, in the interest of mankind, we should hasten to create it.' History has proved the validity of Palacky's formula, but not its success: that has been reserved for a more formidable doctrine uttered at the same congress by a rival speaker. To the Russian anarchist Bakunin the salvation of Slavonic Europe lay in its federation under not a Czarist but a revolutionary Russia. In 1848 this was a visionary project, for Russia, alone of continental powers, was immune from the liberal revolution. A century later it has been achieved—without the liberalism. Among all the belated victories of 1848, that alone has been the universal casualty.

Three T'ang Stories

Translated by Arthur Waley

[The first story is anonymous : the second and third are by CHANG PU, who lived about A.D. 860]

THE LADY IN THE CARRIAGE

In the K'ai-yüan period (713-741) there arrived at the Capital a student from Soochow who had been recommended for proficiency in the Classics. He was taking a stroll through the town when suddenly he met two young men in hemp-cloth shirts, who greeted him as they passed with an air of great deference. He had no idea who they were and supposed that they had mistaken him for someone else. Some days later he met them again. This time they came up and spoke to him, saying : ' We regret very much that since you came to the City we have not had the pleasure of entertaining you. It so happens that we were thinking of asking you to come and see us to-day ; so it is very fortunate that we met you.' They then invited him to come straight home with them. He felt very uncertain whether it was wise to accept, but after some hesitation he followed them. They led him through several wards and down a side-turning near the Eastern Market. Here there were a number of shops standing right on the street. Beside one of them was an entry. They went straight in, and he found himself in front of a very well-kept house. The young men led him up into the main hall, where a large number of sitting-mats were spread. The young men invited him to recline on a hammock and did the same themselves. Standing around were a number of other youths, who all seemed to be about nineteen or twenty years old. They behaved towards the visitor with the utmost deference and politeness. He noticed that from time to time they went to the gate and hung about there, as though they were expecting an important guest. At last, shortly after noon, one of the youths came back into the hall saying, ' They are here ! ' The student heard a carriage at the gate. Presently it drew up in front of the hall, and he saw that it was a splendid equipage, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A number of other young men had escorted it.

The blinds of the carriage were drawn aside and out of it stepped a girl of about sixteen or seventeen. She was very beautiful. Her coiffure was laden with gaily coloured combs, her dress was of the finest white silk. The two young men bowed low to her, standing side by side ; but she did not respond. The student bowed to her, and she responded courteously, motioning him to follow her into the hall. Here she took the principal couch, and motioned to the student and the two young men to sit near her. When they had bowed and taken their seats, about a dozen young fellows, all lightly clad in spotless garments, made their bows and seated themselves below the guest. Very dainty refreshments were served and when the wine had gone round several times, the lady, cup in hand, turned to the student and said : ' These two gentlemen have talked to me about you, and I am very glad indeed to welcome you here. I hear you are an excellent performer yourself and I hope you are going to show us your skill.' The student modestly declined, saying : ' I am afraid that since I was very young my whole time has been given to the study of the Confucian Classics. I have never had a chance to study music.'—' Oh, that is not the sort of performance I meant,' said the girl. ' Just think a little. I feel sure you will recollect some accomplishment that you once possessed.' After reflecting for some time, the student said at last : ' It is true that when I was at school I learnt how to walk several steps up the wall, with shoes on. That is the only trick I ever mastered.'—' That is just the kind of thing I meant,' the girl cried. ' Please do it for us now.' The student succeeded in walking several steps up the wall. ' Good ! ' she said. ' That is not at all easy to do.' Then she turned to the young boys and told them to do some turns. They all rose and bowed. One walked up the wall, another walked along the roof-beam on his hands, and so on, one after another, till they had gone through every sort of acrobatic performance, skimming through the air with bird-like agility. The student raised his joined hands, lost in admiration and awe. Soon the lady rose and took her departure.

The student felt bewildered and rather disquieted by this singular experience. Several days later he met the two young men, and they asked him if he could lend them his horse. He said he would be glad to do so. Next day he heard that there had been a robbery at one of the pavilions in the Imperial grounds. The thieves had escaped their pursuers, but had left behind them a horse upon which they had apparently intended to load part of their booty. Enquiries were made about the ownership of the horse ; the student was arrested and brought to the office of the Palace Admini-

stration. Evidence was taken that it was indeed the student's horse and without more ado he was hustled through a narrow back gate, and an official gave him a push from behind. He fell headlong into a deep pit. Apart from the small hole at the top, through which he had been pushed, it had no other aperture. Nothing happened all day; but at dusk a single bowl of rice was let down through the opening on a rope. He was very hungry and devoured it greedily. When he had finished, the bowl was drawn up again on the rope.

The night was far spent; nothing further had happened, and the student was in a state of the utmost rage, apprehension and misery, when looking up he saw something that he took to be a bird suddenly swoop down through the hole in the roof. It dropped at his very side and he became aware that it was not a bird but a human being. A hand touched his shoulder and a voice said: 'I am afraid you have had a nasty shock and fright. But, now that I have come, you have nothing to worry about.' He at once recognised the voice; it was that of the girl to whom the two strangers had recently introduced him. 'I am going to get you out of here,' she said. She then tied a silken cord twice round his chest, tied the loose end to herself and sprang straight upwards. They shot through the hole and landed well clear of the Palace walls. 'If you take my advice,' she said, 'you will go straight home to the South, and think no more for the present of taking office.' Then she vanished. Thankful to be free, the student set out on foot, secreting himself so far as possible, and by lodging in strange places and begging here and there for a morsel of food, he managed at last to get to Soochow. Never again did he venture to try his luck in the West.

THE GIANTS

In the Cheng Yüan period (785-804) a peasant who lived near Lü-chiang went to the hills to gather firewood. Late in the evening he suddenly saw a foreigner of enormous stature—he was about eight foot high—come out from behind a fold of the hill. He was dressed all in black and armed with arrows and bow. The peasant was very scared and at once fled for cover to a clump of ancient trees. Presently he peeped out and saw that the foreigner was standing still, as though waiting for something to happen. After some time the giant suddenly raised his bow and shot an arrow towards the east. Watching the flight of the arrow the peasant saw, about a hundred paces away, something that looked like a human figure, though it was entirely covered with yellow hair

several inches long. Its head and face were covered by a black cloth. The arrow hit it in the belly, but the creature did not budge. The foreigner laughed and said, 'I thought so! This is more than I can manage.' Then he went away. Then another foreigner, of the same stature as the first, but of even more powerful build, appeared carrying a cross-bow and shot towards the east. He hit the creature in the breast, but it showed no concern and the foreigner said, 'The General might be able to manage it, but no one else could.' Then he went away. Presently twenty or thirty foreigners appeared all dressed in black and armed with bows and arrows. They had the look of an advance-guard, and sure enough they were followed by a giant far huger than the others. He was dressed in purple and presented a fantastic spectacle. As he advanced with slow and majestic stride, the peasant, though safe enough in his hiding-place, found himself trembling from head to foot. The giant looked towards the east and said to his advance-guard, 'Aim at the throat!' They were about all to shoot at once, but the giant checked them, saying, 'Only Hsiung Shu; not the others!' The rest then stood back and one of the foreigners came forward and shot a full 'end' of five arrows one after another. He hit the creature in the neck, but it was quite undaunted and in a leisurely way picked out three arrows that had found their mark. Then holding a huge chunk of stone it advanced towards the west. The foreigners in great alarm cried to their giant General: 'Things are in a bad way. We had better surrender.' The giant foreigner then called out, 'I am in command of this party and wish to make my surrender.' The creature then threw the stone on to the ground and flung off the black cloth. The face was that of a woman, but the head was completely bald. On reaching the foreigners it took over all their bows and arrows, and broke them into pieces. Then it made the General kneel and held his head between its hands. The foreigners implored the creature to spare their leader and many times begged to be allowed to die in his stead. At last it let go. The foreigners stood with their hands raised high above their heads, not daring to move. Presently the creature slowly drew the black cloth over its head and went off towards the east. The foreigners congratulated one another. 'This is our lucky day in the calendar,' they said. 'We should certainly all be dead, if it were not so.' They then all bowed low before their leader and he gave them each a nod. After some while he led them back into the fold of the hills where they had first appeared.

It was now becoming quite dark, and the peasant, drenched with

perspiration, crawled out of his hiding-place and went home. He was never able to find out what creature it was that he had seen.

MRS. MERCURY

In the Ta Li period (A.D. 766-780) a certain Mr. Lü, who was Deputy Assistant Prefect at Shang-yu in Chehkiang, was summoned to the Capital to await re-appointment. He lodged in the Yung-Ch'ung ward, in the south-east part of the city. One evening when he had dined at home with several friends and was just about to go to bed an old woman only about two foot high, dressed in spotless white, came out from the alcove at the back of the room and advanced slowly towards him. She cut so comic a figure that when she came into view Lü and his friends could not help exchanging amused glances. The little old woman came nearer and nearer, and at last when she reached Mr. Lü's couch, she said: 'I think it is very rude of you never to invite *me* when you give a party.' However, when Lü shooed her away she retreated to the alcove and disappeared. He and his guests were all very puzzled and scared; no one had any idea where she came from.

Next day, when he was alone in his room, he saw her again, just outside the alcove. She made as though to come forward, but immediately beat a hasty retreat, as though she were frightened of something. He shouted at her and she at once vanished. He was now convinced that she was an evil spirit and that if he let another night pass without ridding himself of her, disaster would overtake him immediately. He therefore had a sword put under his couch.

When night fell the little old lady came out from her corner just as before and advanced slowly towards him. This time she did not seem to be at all afraid. When she reached the couch, he seized his sword and brandished it at her. Whereupon she suddenly sprang up on to his couch and gave him a great clout with her arm. Then hopping this way and that she raised her sleeves and danced. After a while another old woman sprang on to the bed and cuffed Lü with her arm. He at once felt a shudder run down his whole body; it was as though a frost had suddenly mantled his limbs. He brandished his sword at her wildly and she suddenly became two and then three old ladies, who all joined in the dance. He went on flourishing his sword, and soon there were fully a dozen old women, each little more than an inch tall, and all exactly alike, so that you could not distinguish one from the other. He was now completely surrounded by them and was wondering how he should escape, when one of them said: 'Now we are going to join into one again. Just you watch!' Where-

upon they closed their ring and drew together, facing one another, just in front of Lü's couch. Then they merged, and there was only one old lady, exactly like the one he had seen at first. 'What evil spirit are you,' cried Lü, now very much alarmed, 'that you should dare molest a living man? Be off with you this minute, or I will fetch a magician who will subdue you by his holy art, against which you will be able to do nothing at all.' 'You are very much mistaken,' she said. 'If you know of a magician, I should be glad to meet him. As for my visits to you—they are solely for your entertainment; I have no wish to harm you. Pray do not be alarmed; I am now going back to where I belong.' Whereupon she retreated to her corner and vanished.

Next day someone to whom he mentioned his predicament told him of a certain Mr. T'ien who was known all over Ch'ang-an for his skill in exorcising evil spirits. When he heard about the case, T'ien jumped for joy. 'Just the job for me!' he cried. 'I can rid you of this nuisance as easily as one picks up an ant between the nails of one's finger and thumb. I will come and see you to-night. Do nothing till I come!'

Lü and the exorcist had not been seated for long when the old woman duly appeared. As soon as she reached the couch, Mr. T'ien cried: 'Be gone, foul spirit!' The old woman, not seeming to be at all put out and looking neither to right nor left, began slowly to retreat. When she had reached a certain distance, she said to T'ien: 'You do not know what you are talking about!' And so saying, she shook her hand, which dropped on to the floor and turned into a very small old woman who hopped up on to the couch and then straight into Mr. T'ien's mouth and down his throat. 'I am done for!' cried T'ien, aghast. 'I promised that I would do you no harm,' said the old woman to Mr. Lü, 'but you did not trust me. I made no such promise to Mr. T'ien, and I cannot answer for his good health. As for you, we will make a rich man of you yet!' And with this she went off.

Next day someone suggested to Lü that it would be a good thing to dig under the alcove and see if he found anything. He told his servants to dig in the exact place where the old woman always disappeared. They did so, and they had not dug more than eight feet when they came upon a jar containing a huge quantity of quicksilver. Lü then knew that the old woman was the Quicksilver Spirit. Mr. T'ien, the exorcist, died soon afterwards of the cold-shudders.

Flaubert's Sundays: Maupassant and Henry James

BY FRANCIS STEEGMULLER

Sometime in November, 1875, Gustave Flaubert, fifty-four, celebrated, and just arrived at his new apartment in Paris for the winter, wrote to his friend Guy de Maupassant, then a young man of twenty-five: 'Little Father—It is understood, is it not, that you will lunch with me every Sunday this winter? Till Sunday, then . . .' And every Sunday that winter, or almost every Sunday, Maupassant did lunch with Flaubert.

They were not entirely social, friendly lunches—although affection played a great rôle in the relations between Flaubert and Guy, who was the nephew of the dearest friend of Flaubert's youth, Alfred Le Poittevin, and son of Laure Le Poittevin de Maupassant, Alfred's sister, with whom Flaubert all his life exchanged tender letters. 'For the last month I have been wanting to write you, to send you a declaration of affection regarding your son', he had written her two years before. 'I cannot tell you how charming I find him, how intelligent, good-natured, sensible and witty—in short, to use a stylish word, *sympathique*. Despite the difference in our ages, I consider him a friend, and then he so reminds me of my poor Alfred. . . .' But beginning and continuing in affection, the relationship between the older man and the younger had rapidly taken on something of that between teacher and pupil; for Maupassant, restless in his breadwinning as a government clerk in the Ministère de la Marine, was trying to qualify himself for the greater freedom of a writer's career.

'Flaubert, whom I saw from time to time, conceived an affection for me,' Maupassant tells us in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, 'and I dared show him a few things that I had tried. He was kind enough to read them, and said: "I cannot tell whether you will have any talent. What you have brought me shows a certain intelligence, but don't forget what Buffon says: "Talent is a long patience." So work.' I worked, and returned to see him often, for it was clear that he liked me, and he took to calling me, laughingly, his disciple. During seven years I wrote poetry, short stories, longer stories, even a detestable play—none of which survive. The master read every-

thing ; then, the following Sunday, as we lunched, he criticised, gradually inculcating into me, bit by bit, two or three principles that sum up his long and patient teaching.'

The Sunday lunches of the winter of 1875-76, the third of the 'seven years' of the discipleship, marked an intensification of Maupassant's training. What the training was, what the literary principles were that Flaubert expounded, Maupassant tells us, or tries to tell us, in numerous passages scattered through his works—in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, in the various essays on Flaubert. But even allowing for the fact that at Sunday lunch Maupassant heard Flaubert lay down his principles with something of a teacher's emphasis and simplification, Maupassant's expositions of them are always somewhat crude and naïve, like a series of jumps from one high spot to another in what must have been Flaubert's discourse. Eventually Maupassant became, perhaps to an even higher degree than his master, an artist who brought to blossom in narrative the various literary principles—principles of certain kinds of exactitude, for instance, of objectivity, of rhythm—that he had in part learned and in part always possessed ; but he lacked articulateness about his art, lacked in general the ability to write reflectively. In this Maupassant is in good company among artists. One thinks of the ineffable Parrington's description of Hawthorne : ' Compared with the thinkers and scholars of the time he is only an idler lying in wait for such casual suggestions as he may turn into stories ' ; and one is grateful for the understanding of Henry James in *Partial Portraits* : ' The first artists, in any line, are doubtless not those whose general ideas about their art are most often on their lips—those who most abound in precept, apology, and formula, and can best tell us the reason and the philosophy of things. . . . As a commentator M. de Maupassant is slightly common, while as an artist he is wonderfully rare.'

But if Maupassant is unable to expound with any ease or richness what took place at lunch, so to speak, he is another man when he tells us of the company that came in afterwards, when he ticks off for us Flaubert's other guests :

' He received his friends on Sunday from one to seven, in a very simple fifth-floor bachelor apartment. The walls were bare and the furniture modest, for he detested artistic fripperies. As soon as a peal of the bell announced the first visitor he covered the papers on his work table with a piece of red silk, thus concealing his tools, sacred for him as objects of worship for a priest. Then, his servant always being free on Sunday, he opened the door himself.

The first to arrive was often Ivan Turgenev, whom he embraced like a brother. Taller even than Flaubert, the Russian novelist loved the French novelist with a rare and deep affection. He would sink into an armchair and talk in a slow, pleasant voice, a trifle low and hesitant, but giving great charm and interest to his words. Flaubert listened religiously. Their conversation rarely touched on current affairs, but kept close to matters of literature and literary history. Often Turgenev brought foreign books, and translated aloud poems by Goethe, Pushkin or Swinburne.

Others gradually arrived. Monsieur Taine, with his timid air, his eyes hidden by spectacles, brought with him historical documents, unknown facts, an aroma of ransacked archives. Here come Frédéric Baudry, Georges Pouchet, Claudius Popelin, Philippe Burty. Then Alphonse Daudet, bringing an air of Paris at its gayest, its most lively and bustling. In a few words he sketches amusing silhouettes and touches everyone and everything with his charming irony, so southern and personal; the delicacy of his wit is enhanced by the charm of his face and gestures, by the polished perfection of his anecdotes. Emile Zola comes in, breathless from the long stairs and always followed by his faithful Paul Alexis. He flings himself into a chair and looks about him, seeking to gauge from the guests' faces their states of mind and the tone and trend of the conversation. Then still others: the publisher Charpentier, the charming poet Catulle Mendès, Emile Bergerat, his brother-in-law, who married the daughter of Théophile Gautier; José-Maria de Hérédia, the famous maker of sonnets who will always remain one of the most perfect poets of the age; Huysmans, Hennique, Cécile, Léon Cladel, the obscure and refined stylist, Gustave Toudouze. And finally, almost always the last, a tall, slender gentleman with an air of aristocratic breeding, Edmond de Goncourt.

Maupassant left a memory with some of Flaubert's other guests as being modest, quiet and self-effacing at these Sunday afternoon gatherings; a letter which he wrote that winter to a friend of his own age is illustrated with a sketch of Flaubert, Turgenev and Alphonse Daudet talking together while he himself sits in a corner drawing them—a disciple paying homage to his master and his master's guests.

Also present from time to time in Flaubert's 'little *salon*, which . . . looked rather bare and provisional,' his 'small perch, far aloft, at the distant, the then almost suburban, end of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré . . . at the very top of an endless flight of stairs,' was a young American writer whose occasional attendance has gone apparently unrecorded by his host or by any of the other guests, but which always remained for him a source of vivid recollection, ever richer to him as time went on. This was Henry James, then

thirty-two, who was spending that winter in Paris with the thought, at first, that he might live there permanently, that 'there he would find the literary world with which he had the strongest affinity.' He changed his mind rather rapidly—chiefly, it would seem, as a result of his Sunday afternoons at Flaubert's, where he had been introduced by Turgenev. James (whom Turgenev once described as '*un homme très aimable, qui a beaucoup de talent, avec un certain penchant à la tristesse*') thought his Russian friend 'adorable,' and in Flaubert he 'saw many reasons for Turgenev's regard,' though of him he wrote home to his father 'I think I easily—more than easily—see all round him intellectually'; but he found the rest of the circle not to his liking.

'I have seen almost nothing of the literary fraternity,' he wrote his friend Howells, 'and there are fifty reasons why I should not become intimate with them. I don't like their wares, and they don't like any others; and besides, they are not *accueillants*. Turgenev is worth the whole heap of them, and yet he himself swallows them down in a manner that excites my extreme wonder.'

'What was discussed in that little smoke-clouded room was chiefly questions of taste, questions of art and form,' James tells us; 'and the speakers, for the most part, were in æsthetic matters, radicals of the deepest dye. It would have been late in the day to propose among them any discussion of the relation of art to morality, any question as to the degree in which a novel might or might not concern itself with the teaching of a lesson. They had settled these preliminaries long ago, and it would have been primitive and incongruous to recur to them. The conviction that held them together was the conviction that art and morality are two perfectly different things, and that the former has no more to do with the latter than it has with astronomy or embryology. The only duty of a novel was to be well written; that merit included every other of which it was capable.'

There, among the æsthetic 'radicals of the deepest dye,' James met the young Maupassant. 'Distinct to me,' he reminisced in a letter to Edmund Gosse in 1912, 'the memory of a Sunday afternoon at Flaubert's in the winter of '75-'76, when Maupassant, still *inédit*, but always 'round,' regaled me with a fantastic tale, irreproducible here, of the relations between two Englishmen, each other, and their monkey! A picture, the details of which have faded for me, but not the lurid impression.'

One can picture the two of them, two of the decidedly lesser figures at the gathering—that is, one can be sure that *both* were considered among the lesser by everyone present except perhaps James himself, who 'saw all round' Flaubert—and the young

Frenchman talking to the foreign visitor, *à propos* of English eccentricity (quite possibly he thought James an Englishman)—about visits he had paid to Swinburne, and Swinburne's friend Powell, a few years before in Etretat. Swinburne had nearly drowned in the treacherous Channel waters one October day, and learning that Maupassant had been one of those taking part in his rescue had invited him to the cottage which he and Powell were occupying, and in which Maupassant found not only the 'two Englishmen and their monkey' but a macabre bric-à-brac of human bones, lying about on tables. Among them was a skinned hand—the hand of a parricide, the Englishman informed their guest; and the memory of that hand had never left Maupassant's mind. It was particularly in his mind that winter of 1875-76 when he talked with James, for he had just been inventing a tale about it—one of the tales he wrote during the week and brought to Sunday lunch at Flaubert's, and indeed the very first of his tales ever published: it appeared that winter, entitled *La Main d'Ecorché*, and signed 'Joseph Prunier' (for Flaubert was against the premature appearance in print of the name Maupassant) in an obscure provincial almanac.

James never forgot the 'lurid impression' that the conversation with Maupassant left with him. In a second 1912 letter to Gosse, long and rather immensely congested to be the result of a meeting with Maupassant, whose style James had by now long since praised for its 'masculine firmness' and 'quiet force,' he tells of remembering Guy—(he was only known as "Guy" then)—as being 'tremendously *averti*,' especially for one so young, and as having told him, in addition to the story about the men and the monkey, some equally 'irreproducible' story about how he himself had once received proposals from young Englishmen that necessitated 'prompt and energetic action' on his part. For the rest of his life, even while devoting numerous essays to Maupassant and to the other 'novelists of the general Balzac tradition,' as he called them—essays which in quality go considerably beyond any of Maupassant's critical writings, and in admiration considerably beyond James's own youthful 'I don't like their wares'—we are told that James shuddered at the remembrance of the 'social excesses' of some of Flaubert's friends and related 'unrepeatable stories of the *ménages* of Maupassant.'

What seemed to James the provincial exclusiveness of these French literary men and their 'roundness,' both of which he found so displeasing, are brought rather amusingly into play together when James (according to Percy Lubbock) 'speaks sarcastically on

one occasion of having watched Turgenev and Flaubert seriously discussing Daudet's *Jack*, while he reflected that none of the three had read, or knew enough English to read, *Daniel Deronda*. Whether or not James was thus inappropriately sarcastic—we know that Flaubert had read Shakespeare's *Pericles* in the original (no mean feat even for an Englishman) and that Turgenev translated Swinburne—the circle did discuss *Jack* that winter, Flaubert being for it and Turgenev against; and certain words in the note of thanks and praise that Flaubert sent Daudet about his novel James would almost certainly have described as 'round': '*Tout à vous, cher ami*,' Flaubert ended his note. '*Testiculos habes, et magnos!*'

Did James see something of Maupassant after that winter of 1875-76, as he saw something of Turgenev, Zola and Daudet? They did meet at least once—when Maupassant was in London in 1886; but as to any continued acquaintanceship between them there is, among published sources at least, only the evidence—if evidence it is—of Sigma.

Sigma—whoever else he may be—is the author of an article in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE for August, 1925, entitled 'Guy de Maupassant: A Recollection.' He knew Maupassant, he says, when Guy was 'a big, healthy, witty fellow, best described as full of the old Nick, merrily swimming through the warm waters flowing from thirty to forty.' He had been introduced to him 'as an Englishman who admired him by a man he thought very highly of—Charles Yriarte. He liked me a little, I think: I am certain I liked him very much. We had some curious experiences together, some of which I will narrate and some I dare not. For a time we saw not a little of each other, then we drifted apart owing to my absence for a time from Paris to look after some racehorses I had. . . . ' Rather early in his article Sigma discusses Maupassant's final illness, and it is in connection with that that he makes mention of James: . . . 'There was yet another factor in the acceleration of de Maupassant's physical decay—a small one in itself, no doubt; but as one knows, a mere feather may decide the incline of the already weighted beam. I do not certainly want to be deemed unkind, but I must in all honesty chronicle the fact that I always found poor de Maupassant very much worse after any visit from Henry James. . . . I feel sure that for a highly strung, very clever, very nervous man like de Maupassant—as susceptible to external influences as an aeolian harp—the presence, even if mute, of Henry James—the brow—that special massive brow only built in Boston, the lifeless eyes, the solemnity—was harmful; and if vocal—the metallic voice from which the native twang had been so

successfully and mercifully hammered out as to have deprived it of all life and resonance, conveying platitudes heavily garbed to represent profound paradoxes, molluscs presented as grasshoppers, very harmful. . . . Maupassant had no possible use for James : didn't like him : knew nothing about him. Why James came to him I never could understand. It was cruel to plaster a poor quivering Paphian Parisian like Guy—a Cyprian Champs Elysées cavalier—with a thick layer of undiluted Boston, Beacon Street, and Bunker Hill. Emerson is splendid tippie ; very, very good ; personally I am very fond of it—can drink tumblers of it ; but it does not mix well with Boule de Suif. But to resume ; it may, of course, be all imagination or mere co-incidence ; but I most gravely repeat and truly chronicle the fact that, directly after seeing Henry James, Guy de Maupassant always became much more ill.'

Such is the testimony of Sigma. Can it be accepted ? There is an undeniable air of whimsy and fantasy, not only about those passages but about the entire article ; there are a number of little touches from first to last that suggest that one beware. At least, one cannot be blamed for wanting to know who Sigma is,¹ before deciding whether or not to believe what he says. And who Sigma is, or was, is something that the editors of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE may well honourably decline, even now that twenty years and more have elapsed, to reveal. While awaiting, therefore, some identification of Sigma from internal evidence, or some possible future confirmation of his reminiscences, or some revelations from other quarters, it is best to consider the chief Maupassant-James conjunctions after 1876 to be in James's writings : in his superlative essay on Maupassant in *Partial Portraits* (1888) which won such praise from his brother William—'In your Maupassant you used that author's own directness more than is your wont, and I think with great good effect. If you keep on writing like that I'll never utter another cavil as long as I live' ; in his introduction to the first volume of Maupassant's stories ever published in the United States—*The Odd Number : Thirteen Tales by Guy de Maupassant* (Harper, 1889) ; and in the influence of Maupassant the writer of fiction on James's own story-telling—an influence never visible, it must be confessed, to the *naked* eye, but perhaps now to be perceived, as though through a reading-glass, with the help of James's recently published notebooks, in which, as Mr. Edmund Wilson has pointed out, the example of Maupassant is 'more frequently invoked . . . than that of any other writer.'

¹ Julian Osgood Field : for further details, see the latest volume of Sir Osbert Sitwell's Autobiography.

The Trout Stream

BY DENTON WELCH

I

How well I remember that first visit to Mr. Mellon ! My mother and I had been asked to spend the week-end at his great villa near Tunbridge Wells. He was an old friend of my father's, and since my father was abroad at this time, I think he imagined that we were lonely, sitting in our Kensington hotel, looking out at the fossilised trees in the gardens of the Natural History Museum.

We set out on a dark rather foggy afternoon in early autumn. The light under the dirty glass dome of the station was thick and yellow. The train was just about to start and we had to run down the platform. As I skipped along by my mother, I suspected nothing. I was excited by the hurry, rather pleased that we had to scramble in this way ; but when the door of the first coach had been wrenched open and my mother's suitcase tossed on to the rack, I saw that there was something strange about her. She stood, swaying a little, a sort of smile on her face, her bag still open, although the porter had been tipped. I thought that she was about to move her hands and head in rhythm, perhaps even to hum a song— Then the middle-aged man opposite had jumped to his feet, had taken hold of her, was touching *my* mother ! Between the little white tufts of hair above each ear, his chunky lips were working up and down in agitation. He was saying : ' Oh, is there anything I can do, Madam ? Lean on me. Shall I get a doctor ? '

He seemed impossibly fussy and protective. He was turning my mother into one of those fainting, delicate women, when really she was the strongest, most capable mother anyone could want. Why ! running was nothing to her ; she could dance and swim and ride and play all sorts of games. No one in the carriage would know this now, because of the man. They would all think her a weak woman who had to be held up, fanned with newspapers and given smelling-salts.

I looked up in amazement and said : ' What is happening, Mummy ? ' I pulled at her to make her sit down, for she was still standing, with her head almost against the man's shoulder.

Slowly the train began to move out of the station. My glance darted up to the vast glass roof, so far away and threatening ; it returned to my mother fearfully. But she was recovering. Her smile lost its sleep-walking quality before my eyes. She looked up at the man and thanked him charmingly for his attention, explaining that she had only felt faint for a moment ; then she sat down beside me and took my arm.

We said nothing at first, each, I suppose, feeling relieved and yet shy. I was impatient with her, too, for giving the wrong impression to the people in the carriage ; I had always been proud of her youthfulness and vigour. I was not to know that this was one of the first signs of the illness that was to separate us soon.

When we were near the end of our journey, my mother told me not to say anything about her faintness, since she wanted no sort of to-do, now that she was well again. So it was in a rather strained and careful mood that I left the train and went towards the long black car that was waiting for us. Already we were coming within the influence of Mr. Mellon and I must let no word slip. The car itself, with its high old-fashioned body and glittering carriage lamps, already lighted, was a disappointment. I had expected a man of Mr. Mellon's wealth to have a Rolls-Royce, and here was something that I could not even give a name to. Still it was good to have darkness outside, but to be in the warm padded box with my mother, to be smelling the slightly aromatic dried-up air and playing with the scent bottles, match-boxes and engagement tablets of old cracked ivory—the cracks were black, like my nails, when I was sent to scrub them.

On the outskirts of the town we left the wide avenue and turned in between large clumsy gates. The car-lamps glistened on the fresh paint, showing the branches of monkey-puzzles and rhododendrons beyond. There was a little lodge of grey and red rubbed brick. Everything was hard and ugly and beautifully kept. It reminded me of public parks or cemeteries ; and this effect, together with the shock of my mother's passing illness, and her wish that nothing should be mentioned, all helped to oppress me, so that I dreaded coming to the end of the long curling drive, where Mr. Mellon and his housekeeper would be waiting for us.

I suppose it was this wish to shut the world away that has made me forget almost all the details of our arrival. Just the sight of three huge plate-glass windows, curtained and lighted from within, remains. We were approaching them quickly ;

there was a crunch as the wheels braked on the gravel under the granite porch.

* * *

It is the next morning that is still so clear. It must have been the hour before lunch. I know that my mother took me into the room where Mr. Mellon always sat, the one with the three long windows.

It overlooked the gravel, the starfish flower-beds and the whole stretch of lawn. The sun was pouring in, draining the fire of colour, making the invisible flames seem rather overpowering. I had been told that Mr. Mellon was an invalid, so his wheel-chair did not surprise me. Only the plaid rug across his knees made me wonder fearfully what the legs could be like underneath. Were they all withered away? Were they like drumsticks when the chicken has been eaten? The face beamed at me. I thought it looked like a very large, scrubbed, kind potato. There were only little mounds and valleys, all colourless and smooth, no wrinkles. Mr. Mellon held out his hand and I went up to his chair. He held me against his side. He seemed extraordinarily fond of children, I thought; too fond to be quite comfortable, for I was conscious of his big body so close, the hardness of the wheel-chair and the heat of the fire. Then the door opened and Mrs. Slade the housekeeper came in.

Mrs. Slade was the smiling, confident hostess, and yet somehow it was clear that she was no unpaid wife, friend, or relation; perhaps her very competence set her apart. My mother had explained to me that she was half-Javanese, but I could not quite accept her appearance and kept gazing at her whenever I thought that it would not be rude. I did not like her very soft, creamy skin, or the almost freckled duskiness round her long eyes, but their strangeness held me. I thought the grey seemed out of place in her black hair, for her body was flat and supple, like a young person's, and she was very small.

She began to ask my mother how she had slept, whether she had been brought exactly what she liked for breakfast; then she went over to the fire and wheeled Mr. Mellon back a little, as if she knew, better than he did himself, what was comfortable for him.

'It's nearly time for drinks,' she said brightly, and turning to me, so that I too should be included in her attention, she added, 'My daughter Phyllis will be down in a moment; she is just washing her hands. It is so nice for her to have someone of her own age to play with.'

I was a little alarmed by Mrs. Slade's efficiency, afraid of that smiling hardness. She seemed not to be aware of my nature or my mother's. Her mind was always occupied with the arrangements of the day; and the comforts and pleasures she planned for us were made to sound like duties. She was like the harsh little lodge, the monkey-puzzles and the sharp-edged drive.

The drinks were brought in by one of the tall Indian servants in his red turban and long white coat. As soon as he had left, Mrs. Slade turned to my mother and said: 'The Indians are new since you were here last, aren't they?'

'Yes, where did you get them?' asked my mother.

They were indeed remarkable; all tall and silent in their red and white uniform. Ever since we had arrived I had been wanting to know why they were in this English villa. I knew that Mr. Mellon had made his fortune in the East, but it had been the Far East, not India.

Mrs. Slade was explaining.

'We had so much trouble with English servants, that at last we thought we would try these Indians; they work as a team. A friend of Mr. Mellon's told us of them.'

'They seem very good,' my mother said.

'Yes, I think they do their work well on the whole, and the cook makes excellent curries. You will see; we are to have one to-day.'

This was delightful news to me, since curry was almost my favourite dish.

All this time Mr. Mellon had been beaming at me, at my mother and at Mrs. Slade, sometimes saying a word, but usually leaving the conversation to Mrs. Slade. Now he took from his pocket a little gold box and I was suddenly excited to see the lid blaze with large initials in diamonds. The initials were too big for the box, making it seem crusted and clumsy. I was still more excited when he opened the box and took snuff. Noticing my fascination he held out the box to me. I went up to him again and took it, but did not dare to smell the snuff, imagining that I would sneeze or choke at once. I just held the box and drank in its great value and the beauty of the diamonds.

'I thought only old people, people in history, took snuff,' I said uncertainly, thinking of wigs and swords and other things my mother had told me of.

'I take it because I mustn't smoke, you see,' Mr. Mellon said; then added: 'You like my box?'

For one intoxicating moment I thought he was going to give it

to me. What would it feel like to possess a diamond-studded snuff-box? But he was only amused by my reverent interest. I felt he was almost laughing at me.

'I've another one here,' he said. 'I wonder if you'll like it better.'

He fished in his other pocket and brought out a box with a little urn of flowers on it. The urn, the flowers and ribbons were in every colour of precious stone. I tried to name them: ruby, sapphire, emerald, pearl—I knew no more.

'Oh, yes!' I said with a sigh of wonder and amazement. Could I be really holding such boxes? What would happen to them when Mr. Mellon died? They seemed more desirable to me than anything else I had known.

Suddenly Mr. Mellon took the boxes back from me, slipped them carelessly in his pockets and said with complete irrelevance: 'One day when my legs are better, you and I will go out in the woods behind the house and climb up to where the white elephant lives. I'd like to show him to you.'

I was nonplussed. I knew that Mr. Mellon was paralysed and could never walk again. I knew that there were no white elephants—certainly not in England. Was this a game of make-believe? I was painfully embarrassed.

Mr. Mellon saw it and laughed. I turned to my mother for help and guidance.

'Ah! here is Phyllis at last,' broke in Mrs. Slade.

I guessed that Phyllis had been keeping away on purpose, for she was a dark heavy girl with nothing at all to say. Her eyebrows met in the middle and already she had black hairs on her arms. She stood against the wall, utterly impassive and confident. I could not help thinking her very ugly, and it was a shock to my self-satisfaction when Mr. Mellon showed even more delight in her arrival than he had shown in mine. He asked her to bring him one of the little cocktail titbits, then he put his arm round her shoulders and said: 'Phyllis is a good old sort, isn't she! I've been talking about our white elephant, saying we must visit him when I'm up and about again.'

Phyllis's response to this was a sort of grunt that seemed both sullen and lazily good-natured. It was as if she knew his nonsense of old, but was ready to put up with more of it, since he was good to her.

At lunch I was surprised to see so many Indians; there seemed to be one for each of us, and they came and went with such silent smoothness. Sometimes there was the lowest murmur behind a

screen, sometimes Mrs. Slade made a sign with her hand ; and her eyes followed them constantly. I felt the strain of her watchfulness and saw that she ate in quick abstracted snatches, hardly looking at her plate.

But the curry was what really occupied my attention. There was rice bright gold with saffron, chicken in its glistening brown sauce ; then came innumerable little dishes of condiments. I suppose we had chutneys, Bombay duck, chopped coconut, egg, parsley, peanuts and many other stranger things I still cannot name. I know that I piled them up until I had a little mound, then dug into it joyfully with my spoon.

As soon as I had satisfied my greediness a little, I began to look about the room ; at the walls covered with a heavily embossed gilt paper in imitation of Spanish leather, at the sticky landscapes and still-lives in plaster frames almost a foot deep. Out of the windows I could only see lawns, laurel hedges and the corner of a white conservatory all cast-iron spikes, silvered poppy-heads and gothic tracery. A sense of the deadness of things began to oppress me. I thought that all Mr. Mellon's possessions looked as if no one had ever wanted to use them or enjoy them. I wondered why he had them and kept them in such perfect condition.

Mr. Mellon's long head now seemed to me to be like a peeled satiny log. Phyllis next to him was like some coarse little fair negress, unaware of anything but food. Her mother's much more delicate Eurasian face with its smile and its strain filled me with uneasiness. I looked at my mother with relief, kept my eyes on what always pleased me. Here was the only object that did not seem strange or ugly or inauspicious to me.

Mrs. Slade must have planned that our first lunch should have an Eastern flavour throughout, for we finished with tinned mangoes. The long spoon-shaped slices swimming in syrup disappointed me, the preserving had made them taste more like peaches than anything else, but I had a second helping, since Mrs. Slade seemed to expect it.

Afterwards Phyllis took me into the paddock to show me her pony. A groom brought it out, then left us alone together. I was feeling at a disadvantage, because Phyllis had changed into riding-breeches and looked even tougher and more self-sufficient than before. I thought too that I would probably be expected to ride as I was, in shorts, which would mean two raw patches on the insides of my legs. And what if I should fall off, or show any sort of fear ? Phyllis would just look away, hardly even

bothering to be scornful. The visit to the paddock was an ordeal.

Phyllis stood for some time with her arm on her pony's saddle, doing nothing. The running together of her thick eyebrows gave an effect of frowning, but I think she was really looking at me with no expression at all. At last she said : ' Are you fond of riding ? ' She might have been asking if I liked cleaning my teeth or performing some other irksome duty.

' Yes, last year I rode every week,' I explained : ' but now we are living in London.'

At this Phyllis gave my bare knees a glance and remarked : ' But you haven't got any breeches ; ' then she swung herself on to the pony and trotted briskly to the other end of the field. I watched her go, wondering how soon I could leave without seeming rude. I wanted to explore the grounds by myself.

As she returned, I tried to show some interest, but Phyllis passed without a word. Her face was set ; she might have been all alone. I felt that my welcoming smile must look silly indeed.

Several times she rode round the field, solemnly, without taking any notice of me ; I was only saved from the growing awkwardness of my position by the sudden appearance of Mr. Mellon and Mrs. Slade. My eyes had wondered towards the house rather longingly ; and then I had seen what looked like the strangest of little horseless carriages. It was approaching down one of the winding yellow paths, threading in and out of the trees very rapidly and smoothly.

Soon I could see that it held Mr. Mellon with Mrs. Slade sitting at his feet. Mr. Mellon waved his hand, as if beckoning, so I ran to the gate of the paddock and let myself out.

They had stopped in the protection of a bank of shrubs with mottled leaves, and against this bright yellow and green background their faces looked very pale. I saw that the little carriage was an elaborate motor or electric bath-chair. Mr. Mellon's head was framed in the folds of the calash hood, while Mrs. Slade squatted cross-legged on the tiny space left on the platform. Seen thus, sitting before him like a little Buddha, she was stranger than ever to me ; but I also thought her smile seemed happier and more spontaneous, as if she really enjoyed fitting herself so ingeniously into the bath-chair and racing down the garden paths with Mr. Mellon. She suggested that I might like to try riding in her position and rose from the platform like a dancer, hardly using her hands, and with her legs still crossed. Mr. Mellon said :

'Yes, you just see if you can fit in as neatly as Mr. Slade, then we'll go for a fine ride.'

I crouched on the platform uncomfortably, afraid to lean back for fear of hurting Mr. Mellon's legs, or of feeling them against me. I imagined terrible skeleton legs that could not bear even the lightest touch. Mr. Mellon turned the chair round and we began to glide almost silently towards the house. We passed Phyllis, still riding round the paddock. Mr. Mellon waved; she gave us a glance, seemed to take in the fact that I was sitting at his feet, and returned one wooden gesture.

'I expect you and Phyllis get on like a house on fire,' Mr. Mellon said; 'she's as good as any boy at riding and playing games. You should see her throw a cricket ball!'

Again I wondered that Mr. Mellon could show such fondness for Phyllis; she seemed so very unenticing to me.

We were now passing the house, reaching the wooded ground behind. As soon as the path began to rise a little Mr. Mellon said: 'I know I told you about the white elephant that lives at the top, but we'd better not go to see him to-day. It's not very good for the chair to pull two uphill, and I expect Mrs. Slade's wondering where we've got to.'

I was only too pleased to drop the subject of the white elephant and agreed that we ought to go back at once; but when we were near the front door, Mr. Mellon suggested leaving me, so that he could go back to Mrs. Slade and bring her up to the house in the chair.

As I wandered into the hall, I thought dimly that Mr. Mellon also enjoyed riding in the chair with Mrs. Slade. It might be one of their chief pleasures. I knew he admired her for being so small and supple. I wondered if they ever went out of the grounds in the chair, taking a picnic perhaps and a book; and if they did go out, did people stare to find her sitting there at his feet like an Eastern idol?

How quiet the house was! I guessed that my mother had gone upstairs to write letters or to read on her bed. I began to want to know about the other rooms leading off the hall. I had only seen Mr. Mellon's room and the dining-room. Very gently I opened one of the heavy mahogany doors and found myself in what must have been the drawing-room. The first thing that caught my interest was a cabinet filled with Japanese ivories. There was a smiling woodman with a basket of sticks on his back; a woman in fantastic ceremonial dress; then I saw it—a man crouching down, holding out one hand beseechingly. He must

have been a beggar ; he was naked except for a few rags, and so wasted that there seemed to be no more than a film between me and his tiny skeleton. It was a moment before I realised that the little creatures running over him were rats and that they were gnawing his flesh. The carver had shown the tears in the skin, the rats' minute beady eyes, the teeth of the agonised man. Looking deeper into the open mouth, I saw even a tongue curling back convulsively.

What a horrible thing this delicate ivory was to me ! How could anyone carve such hideousness so lovingly ? How could another human being be found to possess it ? And yet the little figure fascinated me ; I had to turn it over in my hands until every detail had been taken in ; then I shut it back into the cabinet and left the room tingling.

Tea was being laid out on small tables in Mr. Mellon's room ; I went in and found my mother already there. I wanted to tell her about the little starving man, to take her into the drawing-room and show it to her quickly before the others returned ; but something held me back. It was as if the sight were indecent and I did not dare to share it with her.

Soon we were all eating scones and guava jelly, sandwiches of several different sorts, and little cakes brightly decorated with silver balls, crystallised violets, rose petals, and little spikes of angelica. Mr. Mellon said to me : ' You'll want to be with Phyllis again after tea ; grown-ups aren't nearly so much fun, are they ? '

I wriggled, trying to think of something to say that would not slight Phyllis, yet would show that I preferred the company of the grown-ups.

When tea was over, I managed somehow to get out of the room alone. Perhaps I put on the grave air that children assume when they want to be ' excused.' Once free, I waited in my room until I felt that Phyllis had settled to some amusement without me ; then I stole downstairs again and let myself into another of the unknown rooms.

This one was a sort of study. A huge roll-top desk stood in the middle of all types of skins : lions, tigers, leopards, polar-bears, brown bears. All their heads were mounted, with fierce glass eyes staring, and pink plaster tongues, rough as sand-paper, hungry for the taste of blood. These roaring mouths seemed just to have loomed up through the floor ; I could imagine the flat skins gradually filling and taking shape after them, until I would be surrounded by living wild beasts.

'But how can Mr. Mellon wheel his chair in here with so many heads on the floor?' I thought; then I began to notice how unused every object looked. The books were all shut away behind glass in the rather small bookcases. There were no magazines lying about. The ashtrays glistened. Even the blotting-paper on the desk was almost without ink-stains.

I sat down on the polar-bear and had begun to ponder again on the peculiar deadness of all Mr. Mellon's possessions, when the door opened softly and my mother looked in.

'Darling, don't prowl so,' she said, coming across to me; 'they might not understand how fond you are of things. They might think you were inquisitive.'

'I expect they think I'm playing with Phyllis,' I answered.

'Well, anyhow, let's say good night and go upstairs now; it is nearly your bath-time.'

'But, Mummy, have you ever seen so many animals with stuffed heads in one room before?' I asked, to keep her for a few more minutes from taking me to bed.

Should I try to hold her interest by telling her about the little rat-eaten ivory beggar? But once more I put the idea from me.

* * *

When I was bathed and in pyjamas and dressing-gown by the imitation logs that glowed so rosily on the hearth in my room, I said: 'Mummy, who will have Mr. Mellon's snuff-boxes when he dies?'

My mother frowned a little.

'We don't want to think about people dying.'

'But I want to know,' I persisted.

My mother seemed to be wondering whether to tell me something or not.

'Has Phyllis explained that Mr. Mellon is going to adopt her?' she asked, lifting her eyebrows.

'No, Phyllis hardly says anything at all.' Then the full meaning of my mother's words came to me and I added excitedly, 'Will she have the snuff-boxes and everything then?'

'I expect so, darling, but it won't be for a long time, so don't talk about it or think about it any more.'

But once in bed, with the lights out, I thought of nothing else. It seemed to me the greatest waste that Phyllis should have anything more than the necessities of life; then my imagination was caught by the wonderful change in her fortunes; for, without having heard a word on the subject, I pictured Mrs. Slade and

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Phyllis in very difficult circumstances before they had come to Mr. Mellon.

I must have been asleep for some hours when I was woken by soft bumping sounds and the murmur of voices. The noises frightened me ; even after I had recognised one of the voices as Mrs. Slade's, I felt anxious. What could be happening ? There was another gentle bump, Mrs. Slade said : ' There we are ! up at last ! ' and I heard a sort of comfortable grunt from Mr. Mellon.

She was wheeling him to bed. Could she have pulled him up the stairs alone ? The stairs were shallow, but Mr. Mellon would be very heavy and awkward in his wheel-chair. It did not seem possible for so small a woman. Perhaps the Indians had helped, and now she was only manœuvring some odd steps on the landing. They passed my door, still talking in undertones. Mrs. Slade's sing-song voice was murmuring comforting things, as if she were talking to a child ; Mr. Mellon just grunted, or replied in monosyllables.

Their intimacy surprised me, for even while riding in the bath-chair together, there had been some formality ; and, before that, I had thought them quite cut off, in spite of Mr. Mellon's jolliness and Mrs. Slade's metallic smiles. Now they were like two old friends who no longer had to be very polite. It is true that Mrs. Slade still sounded dutiful for I remember thinking, ' she hasn't finished yet ! ' but it was the dutifulness rather of an old nurse than of a professional hostess.

Long after all sound of them had ceased, I felt haunted. My mother's sudden giddiness in the train had fixed my mind on pain and illness, so that I had been made specially conscious of Mr. Mellon's useless legs ; then I had crept into the drawing-room and seen that terrible starving man gnawed by rats. The fearful feelings awakened in me, together with what I thought of as the great ugliness and deadness of Mr. Mellon's surroundings, made me long for to-morrow when we would go back to London. Everybody had been kind, even Phyllis had meant no harm, and yet I wanted to draw away from all of them.

Only the jewelled boxes and the wonderful curry were truly happy memories.

II

I did not see Mr. Mellon again for about six years. During this time he had moved to a house of his own building, a few miles from his old villa. My mother was no longer alive, and I paid this second visit with my father on a hot summer's day.

The approach to the house had lately been planted with all kinds of ornamental shrubs and trees, ranging from green through yellow to pink and greyish blue. I found myself contrasting their gay feathery leaves with the dark glistening toughness of the monkey-puzzles and rhododendrons at the villa. The drive was so thickly planted that I could see nothing of the rest of the garden, nor did the house come into view until we were almost upon it.

It was long and low, only one storey high, built of a light pinkish-fawn brick, with metal casements; apart from its squatness, the sort of house that any prosperous business man might build. When the door was opened by an English servant, I grew even more disappointed. What had happened to the Indians? Was nothing strange left? I began even to regret the ugliness which had disquieted me as a child. I would have found it stimulating now.

My eyes brightened when we were taken into the room where Mr. Mellon sat, for it was octagonal and the floor was an inlay of rubber in baby blue and pink and yellow; it reminded me of nothing so much as the top of some gigantic cake prettily decorated with soft icing.

As I walked forward to shake hands, I felt its slight resilience.

Three sides of the octagon were of glass, and Mr. Mellon's chair stood so that he had the whole of the garden before him. While he was welcoming my father boisterously I stood looking out of the window in some wonder. It was a complete surprise to find the house built on the edge of a small ravine. The garden fell away at once in narrow terraces, held back by large flat rocks. More pointed rocks thrust out of the ground, and a path with stone steps wound in and out of these until it reached smooth lawns and a stream at the bottom. A small rustic bridge led to the other heavily wooded bank, where the ground sloped away more gently.

'Not bad, eh?' said Mr. Mellon, suddenly taking notice of my interest; 'you'd never think we had anything like this here, would you! I must say the landscape-gardener has made a good job of it—really a very clever chap.'

My father went to the window to admire the scene, so that both our backs were turned when Mrs. Slade came in with Phyllis. I was the first to hear their footsteps. Mrs. Slade, like Mr. Mellon, seemed hardly to have changed at all, but Phyllis had grown into 'a breasted woman,' as I put it to myself. Her arms and legs were beefier than ever, and she was much taller than myself. But the full bosom gave me the greatest shock. I thought of her as the mother of fat twins. And was that *lipstick* on her mouth?

Were girls who were not yet sixteen ever allowed to wear lipstick? Apart from this sudden redness, her face was much as I had remembered it. True, the eyebrows had become even thicker, leaving no sign that the long fat caterpillar had ever been two smaller ones affectionately rubbing noses. The expression too had strengthened; the sullenness was now almost formidable; but I was quick to see again that it was misleading, that it arose from her eyebrows and from her quite unmalicious indifference to other people.

As soon as Mrs. Slade had greeted us with many smiles and bright remarks, and Phyllis had nodded her head and held out her thick hand, Mr. Mellon suggested that we should be shown the house and garden.

'Oh, yes,' said Mrs. Slade to my father, 'you've never been to this house before, have you! We like it so much now that it is finished at last. It is much more convenient than the old one; there are no stairs, you see; Mr. Mellon can wheel himself wherever he likes. All the floors are rubber to make things as quiet and comfortable as possible; I wouldn't have anything else now; they are so bright and so easy for the maids to keep clean.'

Still chattering, Mrs. Slade led us into the garden first, to give us an appetite for tea, as she explained. She knew very little about the flowers and rock plants, but she kept drawing our attention to things by saying: 'Aren't those pretty!' or 'Mr. Mellon's very fond of that,' or again, 'I think this is rather rare, but there's nothing much to show for it, is there!'

My father was walking with Mrs. Slade and I with Phyllis, but since Phyllis said so little, I found myself listening chiefly to the other conversation. I heard Mrs. Slade tell my father about the number of men it had taken to move some of the rocks into position.

'But weren't they already here?' my father asked in surprise.

'Oh no, nothing was here—only the banks and the stream.'

Mrs. Slade's voice was very high and fluting; she seemed to be amused by my father's simplicity on the subject of gardens.

'Of course,' she went on, 'this is not a very good garden for Mr. Mellon, most parts are so steep; but he took a great fancy to the site and *would* have the house here.'

'Do you like school?' Phyllis suddenly asked, bringing me back to her with a jerk.

'Yes,' I said hurriedly and quite untruthfully; 'do you like yours?'

'It's all right; some of the mistresses are a bit dim. I needn't

stay after next term though, if I don't want to. Mello says I can go to a finishing school abroad—I can choose where.'

'So she calls him Mello,' I thought; 'and they're going to let her go to one of those schools where the girls just do what they like!' This further proof that Phyllis was being treated almost as a grown-up, filled me with envy. How I longed to have some attention paid to my own private wishes!

We had now reached the bottom of the cliff garden; Mrs. Slade led us across the strip of lawn to the rustic bridge. I leant on the gnarled balustrade and looked down into the water. It seemed quite shallow.

'Oh, do you know what Mr. Mellon has had done?' she asked, as if here were a topic of especial interest to men; 'he has had the stream stocked with trout. There are gratings underneath the water at the boundaries, so they can't swim away. We are hoping they will settle down and have lots of families.'

I now caught a glimpse of a dark shape fanning the water with its silky tail. It held its position under the far bank; then darted away in a flash, leaving me to search for others. I thought of their bodies, soft as moleskin and with a sort of filmy shimmer over them, perhaps a little like the bloom on untouched plums. I knew very little of trout and probably confused them with my memories of lovely prune-coloured carp.

But I was not allowed to gaze into the water for long; Mrs. Slade told me to cross over and look up at the terraced garden and the house.

'It is rather a good view,' she said; 'someone told Mr. Mellon it was like the hanging gardens of Babylon, but I don't know how he knew.' She gave her little tinkling laugh.

Far away I could see Mr. Mellon in his great bow-window; he looked like a captain on the bridge, I thought—a captain who had sat down and given up worrying about his ship.

After a moment, he saw me too and waved. He was smiling broadly, as if I had done something to amuse him. I waved back; he took out his handkerchief and pretended to be a Boy Scout signalling. I wondered how long I ought to keep my eyes on him.

'We'd better not go any farther now,' Mrs. Slade was saying to me; 'there is much more to show you, but it's rather a stiff climb back and you'll be wanting tea; perhaps your father will be able to bring you over again quite soon.'

Crossing the stream rather reluctantly, I started to walk beside Phyllis again. In spite of my envy, I felt warmer towards her

since our slight talk ; we had never exchanged so many words before. I tried another subject.

'Can you bathe in the stream?' I asked.

'Not now the trout are in it.'

Her tone made me feel I ought never to have asked such a question.

'Mello says they mustn't be disturbed.'

'Does Mr. Mellon ever fish for them?'

'Oh, no, he never goes down there.'

'Who does fish then?'

'Nobody's allowed to until the fish have had babies ; they've got to settle down.'

'Well, who *will* be allowed to fish?' I persisted, rather hopelessly.

'Oh, I don't know, people who come, friends of Mello's, I suppose. He might let you, if you come next year.'

Phyllis paused after this last kind remark ; I realised suddenly that she was about to tell me a secret.

'As a matter of fact I *do* sometimes bathe, if you'd really like to know,' she said, grandly ; 'there's a place where the trees lean over the water ; I take off all my clothes and go in there—with nothing on,' she added, to make sure that I understood her fully.

She was looking at me, trying, I think, to find out the effect of her words. Did she want me to be confused and red? Or was she hoping for a lively interest in her nakedness? Perhaps she only wanted me to admire her devil-may-care attitude towards Mr. Mellon, the carefully nursed trout, and the curiosity of the gardeners.

It was difficult to return the gaze of those sulky eyes. The thick red lips were set as though carved out of wood and painted. The whole face had the relentless quality of some Polynesian image. I felt that the only protection was for me to make my face as mask-like as her own. I tried to do this, and when she saw that I had nothing to say, she began speaking again herself.

'Of course, it's not much fun, you can't really swim, it's too shallow ; I just splash about.'

'Aren't you afraid of being seen?' I asked, as colourlessly and casually as possible.

'Oh, the trees make it quite private, but I wouldn't care much if one of the gardeners did come along. He wouldn't tell. Even if he did, Mello would only be a bit angry at first about his fish. I could get round him ; he lets me do what I like.'

This was spoken as we climbed the last few steps to the house.

I was afraid that Mr. Mellon might hear through the open window, but Phyllis did not even trouble to lower her voice.

My father and Mrs. Slade had sunk down on one of the stone seats on the terrace, and when Mr. Mellon saw how hot my father was, he called out: 'You'll want something instead of tea, I can guess!'

My father laughed and shook his head; but I think he was very pleased to see whisky and soda appear with the tea-tray.

As soon as everything had been brought and we were left to ourselves once more, I turned to Mrs. Slade and asked what had happened to the Indians.

A bright stare came into her eyes; she held her neck so stiffly that barely perceptible tremors ran up to her head.

'Oh, we had to get rid of them,' she said, with careful smiling unconcern; 'they were good at first, but we found that the cook was awfully extravagant—then we had trouble with one of the others.'

There was a sudden gleam of fierceness in the soft brown eyes, as if some memory had stung her; the next moment it was drowned in smiles which asked me to believe that the Indians had been nothing but an amusing trivial episode. I wondered why the thought of the Indians should have excited Mrs. Slade; I guessed that she had been worsted in some scene and that her Eurasian blood still felt the outrage. I had never seen her angry before; there had been a sort of quenched anxiety and a pre-occupation with the details of the day, but her attitude to other people had seemed unchanging. In public at least she treated her daughter and Mr. Mellon with the same brittle sociability that she accorded to little-known guests. I remembered how as a child I had been disquieted both by her Eastern appearance and her mechanical smiles, and now a little of the uneasiness returned. I saw her as a woman who hid so much that when a spark of feeling did escape, it flashed with all the rage of the fire within. This rather sensational picture of her made me want to turn away from the long oily eyes, and the creamy cheeks that were too soft. I wanted the reassurance of my father's sleepy good nature; even Mr. Mellon's embarrassing heartiness, Phyllis's silences were refreshing.

We sat long over tea—my father and Mr. Mellon had begun to talk about the past; and so little time was left for our inspection of the house. I felt disappointed as we hurried down a wide gallery, glancing into room after room almost without pausing. I remember chiefly the patterned rubber floors, the monotonous primrose and chromium of every fitting in the kitchen, and the

fantastic decoration of the bedroom which Mrs. Slade laughingly said should be mine, when I came to stay, since I was fond of 'artistic things.'

The modern four-post bed had a pagoda roof with little wooden bells under the curling eaves ; it was painted in dull blue, pale meat red and yellow ochre, and all the mouldings were picked out in gold. On the dusty mauve walls large dragons coiled towards each other ferociously ; their claws and teeth and scales were also gilded. The chairs had elaborate lattice-work backs. Everything was so new, so mat, so European in spite of all Chinese hankerings, that I was reminded at once of some painted back-cloth for Aladdin which I must have seen as a child ; the furniture and walls had the same powdery distemper bloom, the designs the same coarseness.

Here, as in every other room, I looked for the little ivory carving of the starving man that had so horrified me on my first visit to Mr. Mellon ; but it was nowhere to be seen ; I doubt if it could have been found, even if I had not been so hurried ; for everything was changed in this new house. Nearly all the floors, walls, and hangings were in the pale shades associated with babies, powder-puffs and sugared almonds, just as the shrubs in the drive had the light feathery leaves that I had never seen at the villa. There everything had been rigid and glistening and tough, here all was downy, almost scented—even the fantastic things were in pastel colours. But in spite of all changes, something of the villa's atmosphere remained. As we walked back to the octagon room to say good-bye to Mr. Mellon, I tried without success to define what spirit it was that still lingered under the soft prettiness.

Mr. Mellon was gazing out of his huge window and taking snuff ; I saw him for a moment through the crack of the door before he was aware of us. His face was quite blank and empty, more than ever like a peeled trunk of wood. The welcoming smile that suddenly puckered all the features gave me a stab of discomfort, so that I wished I had not caught him as he was alone.

'Seen most things ?' he called out with rowdy boyishness.

There was a flash as he put his jewelled box away.

'Pity you hadn't more time. All the more reason why you must come again.'

He put his hand up to my shoulder to say good-bye ; then, perhaps because he could no longer treat me as a child and hug me, he stretched out his other arm and caught Phillis. She allowed herself to be drawn to him with her usual seeming ill grace ; he

encircled her waist, swung her gently on her feet and gave her stomach a loving pat or two.

'We'll want to see him again very soon, won't we, Phyl?' he said.

Phyllis grunted.

I was becoming more and more uncomfortable when the opening of the door created just the slight diversion necessary for a not-too-unnatural escape. As soon as the heavy hand was taken from my shoulder, I turned, to see a new face hovering in the doorway.

'Yes, what is it, Bob?' asked Mrs. Slade.

'Oh, excuse me, Madam, I came to see if Mr. Mellon was ready for his massage; it's his time.'

'In a minute, Bob, in a minute,' Mr. Mellon called from the other end of the room.

'Yes, sir,' Bob said, and shut the door.

There had just been time for me to take note of Bob's curling fair hair, pink-brown colouring, and pursy cheeks. These last gave to his face the cast of an earlier century. His eyes seemed to stare a little, as though the lids were not quite full enough to cover them. He was near enough to my own age to make me conscious of his body under the white coat and dark trousers. It was as if I were asking myself: 'Will I look anything like that in four or five years' time? Will I have thick legs, thick arms, deep chest? Will I look so well-fed and strong?'

He appeared to be a favourite of Mrs. Slade's; she turned to me and said: 'You've not seen Bob before, have you? He's a very nice boy; he first came only as a valet; then we had him trained as a masseur, and now he does everything for Mr. Mellon. It is an excellent arrangement.'

Mrs. Slade might have been talking to an intimate woman companion, instead of to a young boy; I realised that my appreciation of Bob would not satisfy. She wanted real enthusiasm.

Mr. Mellon held Phyllis till the last moment, then, as we were leaving the room, he released her with a playful spank, saying: 'Off you go, Phylly, to wave good-bye.'

But Phyllis did not run forward to escort us to the car; she ambled along, some way behind her mother.

My last picture was of her leaning against the open door, while, in the hall behind, Bob hurried back to the octagon room to begin his master's massage as soon as possible. Mrs. Slade was showering us with busy smiles and hand-wavings. The car started, we turned and were quickly lost in the feathery trees.

III

Once more Mr. Mellon, Mrs. Slade and Phyllis disappeared from my life ; I did not even hear of them, or if I heard, I quickly forgot the slight mention of some unimportant detail. But when I was nineteen, a new friend at the art school asked me to his parents' home for Easter, and I accepted impulsively.

So one grey evening I found myself in a little Sussex village, standing on an unknown doorstep, feeling very reluctant about ringing the bell.

I need not have been anxious, for the house was comfortable and my friend's mother seemed really pleased to see me.

She had just returned from Egypt ; it was clear that her husband and son had not listened to her experiences with nearly enough interest ; she was delighted to be able to pour all her stories into a new ear.

When asking me to stay, my friend had said rather brutally : ' My mother's an awful fool, you know.' Perhaps she did show more capriciousness and wilfulness than is quite acceptable ; but in spite of slight signs of childish whining or petty tyranny, we were soon on very good terms, even going off together to explore churches and a ruined abbey, while the others stayed at home.

When we came back from these expeditions, my friend would look at me as if he were wondering how I could have borne his mother's company for a whole morning, or afternoon. The father also flashed glances at me sometimes ; he seemed to be looking for signs of weariness or irritation, and because he could not find them, he was grateful, more polite than ever, yet somehow less friendly. It was as if he were relieved to see my easiness with his wife, but felt cut off from real communication with me just because of it. I had the vague notion, perhaps quite fanciful, that both father and son would have preferred it if I had appeared to enjoy myself less.

On the fourth or fifth day of my visit, John's mother announced at breakfast that there was to be a tea-party in the afternoon. Extravagant groans came from John and his father, and once more they made me feel that I too ought to be pulling some sort of disapproving face, instead of wearing the ridiculous smile of the perfect guest, pleased at any suggestion, however inane.

Both John and his father had threatened to go out ; but as the time for the guests to arrive drew near, I noticed that they were looking trim and fresh, as though their faces had been dipped in cold water, their hair brushed vigorously and their ties straightened.

Tea for so many people had been laid on the long dining-room table, and I was placed next to my hostess.

'Come and sit near me and help me with the tea-cups,' she had called in her soft screech; 'John is no use, he only thinks about his own stomach.'

At first I had little time to listen to conversation because I was walking round the table with cups of tea and plates of buttered toast and scones; but when I came back to my place, the fluting, warbling tones of the woman on the other side of John's mother caught my attention. There was the faintest suggestion of the electric guitar about her voice.

'But my dear,' she was saying; 'you should have been there; it was fantastic, but quite fantastic! In all our eighteen months of house-hunting we've never come across anything like it. All the floors were rubber; I had the awful feeling that I was trapped in a gigantic lavatory; it was terrifying. One room was fitted up as a sort of tea-house in Chinatown, another was sexagonal, I think, if there is such a word, and it doesn't sound too rude; anyhow, all these six or more walls seemed to close in on one, and there was an enormous window which just screamed out for one of those horrible dentist's chairs.'

At first her words floated in a void, but as the description grew, they seemed to link up with something in my own experience; I began to listen intently.

She was talking of the garden now.

'Darling, even the plants were weird, and there were *the* most enormous rocks—rather marvellous really, if they hadn't seemed so completely out of place. The money that must have been poured into that garden!'

Surely there could be no more doubt? It was Mr. Mellon's house and garden that were being so cruelly described. I realised for the first time that, since we were so close to the border, Mr. Mellon's place in Kent could only be five or six miles away at the most. Feeling angry with this unknown woman for laughing at tastes that I myself had always thought strange, I decided to go over to see Mr. Mellon as soon as possible; then it came back to me with a shock that she had been talking of a house that was to let or for sale, an empty house, whose key, decorated with a large label, must hang on one of the local house-agent's hooks.

Where had Mr. Mellon gone? Was he at this moment building another house somewhere else? I suddenly wanted to know all that had happened since I last saw him.

While the woman was describing the house and garden, John's

mother had not spoken, but her eyes had danced. Now the words came pouring out.

'But Dulcie, didn't you know? Didn't anyone tell you about that house?'

'Oh no, *do* tell me, I haven't heard a word. Is it haunted by some horribly unclean spirit? Or has *the* most atrocious murder been committed there? I can believe anything, *anything*.'

'No, it wasn't a murder, but the place is quite possibly haunted by now,' said John's mother with satisfaction, her eyes dancing more than ever. A faint flush had come into her cheeks.

She was in no hurry to reach the climax of her story; she seemed to wish to savour both her own excitement and the suspense of her audience.

'Perhaps you wouldn't have heard of it,' she mused; 'perhaps it is rather a local tragedy.'

'Darling, stop maundering! I'm mad to know what happened.'

'Well, you remember the rock garden?'

'Yes.'

'And the path leading down to the stream?'

'Yes, yes, pet, don't be so ponderous, I remember it all perfectly.'

'Well, one day the housekeeper ran down the path, jumped into the stream and drowned herself.'

The words seemed to tumble over each other, as if John's mother had suddenly grown tired of trying to unfold her story skilfully. For a moment I could not grasp their full meaning, then the exclamation: 'It's Mrs. Slade, she means Mrs. Slade!' kept ringing in my head like some battle-cry or line from a famous poem.

'But why did she drown herself?' the woman was asking; 'we must know *everything*.'

John's mother beamed gratefully.

'Of course I didn't know them myself, but I've heard little bits from people who did; they've all said that it was the queerest household. The man was an invalid. He seems to have been very good indeed to this housekeeper, who was half Japanese or something of that sort; he had even adopted her daughter.'

The woman called Dulcie raised her bald-looking eyebrows.

'Yes, I thought that rather an interesting point, too,' said John's mother; 'but anyhow, when this daughter suddenly eloped with the chauffeur, the mother was so upset that she just flung herself into the stream; and I'm told it's only quite shallow. One of the gardeners found her later.'

Something had mounted from my stomach to my heart, to my head. Perhaps I had turned very red. I looked at my hostess's

bright chirpy smile and understood why her son thought her so silly. Now that she had told her story she was like a bird waiting for crumbs. Her head was cocked a little to one side ; she seemed to be contemplating her own winsomeness, to be modestly disclaiming any credit for the suicide.

Through the surge and tingle in my head, I found myself asking her if she was sure that the daughter had run away with a chauffeur.

'Someone like that,' she said, a little piqued to have her story questioned ; 'actually, now you ask me, I believe I did hear later that he was more the personal servant of the old man, the sort of valet-nurse.'

'Was he called Bob?' I asked, unable to stop myself.

'How should I know?'

John's mother was staring at me curiously. She was about to ask if I knew the family. I picked up a plate of little cakes and started to pass them round the table. When the question came, I pretended not to hear but I answered it under my breath, to myself, 'Yes, I knew them, but not very well. She wasn't half-Japanese, she was half-Javanese—I expect it was Bob who ran away with Phyllis ; I only saw him once for a moment, but I can imagine it so easily with him. It must have been Bob.'

People were already beginning to leave the table, to wander into the other room or talk in groups near the windows. I decided to put down my cakes on a side table and escape into the hall.

I was out, and nobody had appeared to notice me. I could hear the chatter and smell the cigarette smoke creeping under the door. It was still quite light outside ; I opened the front door and let myself into the garden.

I walked behind hedges until I came to the old stables ; there I found John's bicycle and began to pump the tyres. I tried the lamp and saw that the battery was fairly new. That was good. I would need it.

By great good fortune I found my way without a mistake to the village nearest Mr. Mellon's house ; after that my progress was more difficult. But at last someone directed me down the right lane ; I came upon his drive, had almost passed it, before something told me to look again. Yes, the trees and bushes were bigger, but I could recognise them.

It was dusk now ; objects were beginning to lose their colour and sink into each other, like lead soldiers melting on the nursery fire. I saw an orange square of light somewhere through the trees and wondered if a caretaker lived there. I was suddenly afraid of being discovered in Mr. Mellon's grounds. What explanation

of my prowling could I give? I remembered my mother saying: 'Darling, don't prowl so.'

Pushing my bicycle into the shrubs, I walked swiftly down the drive till I came to the point where it turned and one saw the long squat house. I stood still, shocked by the blankness of the windows; they were oblong eyes over which a terrible fungus of nothingness was growing. And the porch was a great black mouth, the jaws of the whale that swallowed Jonah, the gates of Hell in an ancient wall painting. I could not walk into the yawning cadaverous blackness under that plain brick arch; I could not even look through those neat metal casements, now that they had been turned into horrible eyes filmed with cataract. I stood back from the house, staring through its walls, picturing Phyllis and Bob as they prepared for flight. Phyllis would be packing everything of value into a small soft suitcase while Bob waited rather desperately by the door. She would put in all the jewels and trinkets Mr. Mellon had ever given her. She would be methodical, heavy, placid; but Bob would be pulling at his collar and jerking down his sleeves. His large eyes would roll from her to the door and back again. She would take no notice of his longing to be off, until the last object had been fitted in.

Because I knew nothing of them as they were to-day, because I did not even know for certain that it was Bob who had gone with Phyllis, my picture seemed squalid and meaningless and dead. It was the counterfeit of a counterfeit. The bare fact that Phyllis had run away with a lover was in itself papery and unreal. I had been given no reason, only told that it was so; therefore my mind kept teasing and plucking at ideas.

At last I made myself turn from them and from the house; I would strain no more after reasons, just let thoughts float through my head, while I wandered in the garden.

It was a relief to plunge into the bushes; somehow they were not fearful, as they might well have been at nightfall, they seemed to offer warmth, a protection against the balefulness of the house. I pushed and threaded my way blindly, till I came out on a ridge of the ravine, some way from the house. To the left I could see the great window of the octagon room gleaming palely against the sky. There was no proper path here, only a sort of gardener's track. I walked to the end, then began climbing down from terrace to terrace, avoiding the plants by standing on the rocks. The garden was still being tended; I could see patches of softly crumbled, weedless earth. Birds were scudding across the sky, calling forlornly, as though the coming of night were some sort of

catastrophe for them. When I reached the foot of the ravine, I was hot and tired ; sweat had begun to sting in the scratches I had received from the shrubs and trees. I sat down on a rock enjoying the cold moistness that was already coming from it. The stream flowed near me, industriously, secretly, like some man who sings and mutters and swears at his work.

I sat listening for some moments, then stood up and walked towards the bridge. From the other bank I looked up the tortuous path. All at once I thought of Mrs. Slade as she must have been when she ran down to drown herself. I saw her crying, crying, stumbling over the artfully uneven stone steps, chattering madly all the time. Nothing could stop her ; if she fell, she was on her feet again in a moment, stockings torn, knees bleeding. She was like a wingless bat, wrapped round in a little whirlwind. Her greying hair flared out in a tangle wilder than Beethoven's ; and her eyes had grown into pools of boiling tar. They were still growing ; suddenly I was caught up in them, so that I plunged into the stream with her and heard them sizzle as we struck the water . . .

I was standing now on the very brink of the stream looking straight down into the black water. The night wind ruffled the surface into little fish scales. One of the birds kept up its perplexed, lost flying and calling. Darkness was gathering in the branches of the trees, thickening under the rocks, turning them into grotesques and derelicts standing in puddles of ink. One was a man with an elephant's trunk which he clutched to himself desperately. Another had huge monkey ears ; all the rest of him had sunk into a belly like a giant's tea-pot. The biggest was an ancient pugilist who had given up hope and died at last by the side of the road. He was a vast lump of sagging muscles and despair.

High up above them the dark bow of Mr. Mellon's window jutted out. I thought of him sitting there, taking snuff, staring blankly, waiting for Bob or Phyllis or Mrs. Slade to come. I saw him as a great sick bird, a turkey wrapped in flannel. How long was it before he realised that he had been deserted by all three of them ? Did he watch the gardeners bringing the body up the twisting path ? Where was he now ? Had he found other people to look after him ?

Then I remembered how fond he was of the stream, how he had stocked it with trout and told Phyllis not to bathe there.

And all the way up the cliff, back to my bicycle in the drive, I kept wondering if the fish had been very disturbed when Mrs. Slade plunged in and drowned herself.

Four Songs of the Italian Earth

BY OSBERT SITWELL

I.—SPRING MORNING

Not so fine,

But warm, oh warm

With an early smell of straw, of orris and of roses.

Listening clouds of sleep

Hang upon towers

As roses cling to walls,

Press the glistening flowers

Into the warm, damp earth again.

The little pigs squeal among the trodden straw,

The strawberries are sodden.

Under the eaves in the sweet, invisible rain

The birds chirp and gurgle in the gutters.

‘Is it fog that nuzzles my hand?’

The old man mutters.

‘Damp and white is the fur of the old hunting-dog,

White and damp as fog,

His coat smells of wet, but also of days that were good,

When I was not stiff as wood in each bone

And he slept less in the sun of an afternoon.’

II.—SUMMER

Sun dissolves to recreate.

Brick smoulders,

Plaster moulders

In the sun.

On the riven ground

The sweat of my labour falls all day like the rain.

Each night I die,

And in the morn am born again.

No time for my gun !
 Yet I wipe my hair back from my forehead,
 Look round me.
 Not a bird in sight !
 Flowers blow : mountains show :
 Fruit and sky grow and glow.

What is the day's beat,
 In the summer's husk ?
 Men calling in the fields,
 Wheels creaking through the buzz and hum of summer.
 But at night, in the heart of the heat,
 The sounds are different,
 Whether dry or glutinous ;
 The rhythmical, high shuffle of the cicada among the grasses,
 The cool, cold-blooded cry of hunting owls
 Who float and flap luminously in the darkness
 And over all, that primal chant of earth,
 The frogs, within their thick and mottled skins,
 Croaking their common sense, croaking
 In patches of warm wet darkness,
 Lost in the universe ;
 Voices that only die when the chant of the priest begins,
 After the day's first burst of tumbling, grumbling bells.

III.—AUTUMN

The moth hums under the beams
 In the darkened rooms,
 Cool in their darkness, enclosed in autumn's glow
 As the stone of the peach is bitter within sweet flesh.

The moth hums and hovers under the rafters.
 And below, men sing as they swing the oar of the wine-press,
 Till the sharp juice spurts on the pavement and dyes it,
 And the acrid scent sours the air,
 Crisp and blue with the smoke of bonfires.

Now my dog whines to be out,
 And we go with my gun,
 Walking stiffly into the light of the evening, the light of the mountains,
 Into the very eye of the sun,
 Until as I hide, to aim,
 The cypress and I grow one.

IV.—WINTER

Rime lies crisp upon the ground,
But not in the great marshes.
There, the angry snout of the boar
Brushes aside the rushes.

In villages, tilted upon hills,
The swarthy, innocent-faced shepherds
Squeal on their wooden trumpets,
Squeak on their bagpipes,
Before the gold-haloed Virgin.

On the hills, under flat-topped pines,
The flames that were lit by the resting hunters,
Die like stars in a moment's sunshine
And leave a glistening ring upon the earth.

To Mark Time

BY ANNE RIDLER

To mark time is not to move :
Only the unkept hours drip from the clock
Or pull at the cord coiled in its groove,
The marker moveless, and the change illusion.

The sundial shows only delightful hours,
Nor seems to move although the shadow changes.
You who watch the moment, standing still
For the peace which, always coming, never will,

Look how this child marks time within its flesh
In multiplying cells whose life is movement;
Hold it in your arms and so enmesh
The moving moment, promise and fulfilment.

So nurse the joy of which the smiles speak ;
See how the lashes, like the sundial's finger
Measuring only light—the heavenly light—
Mark this time in shadows on the cheek.

The Saracen's Head

or The Reluctant Crusader

BY OSBERT LANCASTER

[FOR CARA AND WILLIAM]

PART ONE



ONCE upon a time, in the reign of King Richard Cœur-de-Lion to be precise, there lived in Sussex a certain landowner known as William de Littlehampton.

He was exceedingly rich, the lord of five manors with the rights of soccage, corkage and drainage between Chanctonbury Ring and Bognor-

supra-Mare and in addition he enjoyed the rare privilege of fishing for sturgeon in the river Arun. (In fact there are no sturgeon in the river Arun but this was nevertheless regarded as a very rare distinction.) His principal residence was the castle of Courantsdair, a large, prominently situated building completely equipped with drawbridge, moat, bailey, keep, posterns, dungeons and all the usual twelfth-century fittings and enjoying a magnificent view of the south downs and the English Channel. Though immensely strong it had already been built over a hundred years and unfortunately even by twelfth-century standards was considered more than a little uncomfortable. The fire smoked without stopping, the wind whistled round the great hall through a dozen cracks and none of the window shutters fitted properly, which was all the more noticeable as none of the windows had any glass. William, who every year from the beginning of November to the end of May had a constant succession of colds, coughs, bronchitis and influenzas, was fully aware of these defects and had made several attempts to make his home a little more up to date, but he had never yet

succeeded in overcoming the resistance of his mother, a remarkably tough old lady of sixty-eight of whom, I am sorry to say, he was very much afraid. Whenever he suggested putting a screen across the entrance to the kitchen or hanging some arras on the walls of his bedroom his mother promptly reminded him that his dear father had never had any such sissy fittings in his day, and what was good enough for old Sir Dagobert should certainly be quite good enough for his son. William invariably agreed, apologised deeply for having raised the matter and tried hard to suppress his sneezes for the rest of the evening in case his mother should think he was playing for sympathy.

Sir Dagobert de Littlehampton, who had died as the result of a most unfortunate accident very shortly after the birth of William, his only son, had been renowned throughout Christendom for his bravery, powers of endurance, exceptional strength and outstanding skill in all manly sports and exercises. At the age of six he was taken on his first wild boar hunt and his horse, having the ill-luck to catch its foot in a rabbit-hole, was thrown heavily. Just at that moment the boar, of quite extraordinary size and ferocity, turned round in his tracks and, bellowing horribly, made straight for the prostrate lad. Without a moment's hesitation and with complete presence of mind, little Dagobert drew out his pocket knife and just as the infuriated beast, which was straddling its prey, was lowering its head to rip the fearless child with its vast tusks, he plunged it into the boar's stomach which with one decisive gesture he slit from end to end. The news of this exploit came to the ears of the King, who chanced to be passing through the neighbourhood at the time. As a token of his admiration, he granted Dagobert the right to bear as his crest a severed boar's head proper, which was why this device was embroidered on the great standard which ever flapped above the keep of Courantsdair. The skull of the animal, complete with tusks and tastefully mounted, hung on the wall of the great hall where it had frequently given William the fright of his life as he came upon it unexpectedly in the dim torch-light on a winter's evening.

By the time Sir Dagobert had reached the age of his son at the opening of our story—twenty years and two months—his fame had spread far and wide. Five times Junior Tilting Champion of the Southern Counties (winning the cup outright in 1138), winner of the All-England Archery Competition on two separate occasions and runner-up in the finals of the Mercian Battleaxe Contest in the following year, he had already taken part in two pitched battles, five forays, eleven skirmishes and three sieges. In addition he had killed two knights in single combat and unhorsed several more.

Of the men-at-arms, archers and common foot soldiers that he had dispatched he had already long since lost count. But with all these triumphs, which increased as the years passed by, his joy remained incomplete for he had no son and heir. Year after year his wife, a woman of like temper to himself, gave birth to a strapping girl until, at long last, in his sixtieth year his only son was welcomed into the world by eleven sisters. (Six more, less hardy than the others, had died of colds, croop, or bronchitis during the various hard winters.)

Unfortunately Sir Dagobert did not long survive hearing the good news—he never saw little William at all—as just at this time he met his death as the result of the most exceptional ill-luck at the siege of an obscure town near Limoges. It so happened that in the view of the King of England, who was besieging the place,



the hour had come to make a final assault and so bring to an end an operation which had already gone on far too long, and, in order to insure the success of this attack, various siege engines of the latest design and enormous power had been brought up. Now Sir Dagobert disapproved on principle of all such new-fangled devices, considering them ungentlemanly, and, in so far as they were not completely useless, likely to discourage a healthy enthusiasm for hand-to-hand fighting and cold steel. The skilled engineers who operated these fearsome and complicated machines he habitually referred to as 'those ruddy plumbers.' Now it so chanced that on the first morning that a gigantic catapulta had been set up Sir Dagobert passed by in the company of some other like-minded warriors to whom he was expressing his customary contempt for long-range weapons in general and catapultas in particular, when in order to emphasise his distaste he delivered a scornful kick with his mailed



foot at a small lever projecting from the framework of the machine. Unfortunately the mechanism was already wound up and the projection was in fact the lever which set the whole thing in motion. The next second the gallant old knight, the pride of Christendom, was hurtling through the air in a wide arc in the general direction of the besieged town. It was some minutes after he had made a dramatic landing head first into the principal square that he realised exactly what had happened and, when at last the full ridiculousness of his mishap became apparent, he was so furious that he burst a blood-vessel and died on the spot. However, as in life so in death, success crowned his every exploit, for the townspeople were fully convinced that his unexpected arrival was but the first indication of a large-scale airborne attack and promptly threw open their gates and surrendered unconditionally.

The King, when he heard the news, gave Sir Dagobert a full military funeral and shipped his body back to England at the tax payers' expense. The fine old warrior was deeply and sincerely mourned by his disconsolate widow, eleven daughters and numerous friends and relations, and was buried in the village church beneath a magnificent monument which exists to this day. If you ever chance to visit it pause and reflect for a moment on the virtues and character of the deceased and, bearing in mind his untimely end, remember that it seldom pays to be scornful of Science.

In the years that followed, the Dame de Littlehampton had devoted herself to the upbringing and education of her only son with the fond intent that he should grow to resemble his beloved father as closely as possible and in every way. With this purpose in view she subjected little William from his earliest years to the strictest discipline. The best instructors in such manly pursuits as wrestling, single-stick, boxing, archery and above all tilting were engaged regardless of expense; three times a week in all weathers the little lad was made to follow the boarhounds, staghounds, foxhounds or basset-hounds according to the season; and no matter how cold the day, even in blackest January, he was forced to swim once round the moat before breakfast.

Sad to relate this carefully designed and regularly practised régime had proved a sad failure, for the older William grew the less he resembled his famous parent. Even at a tender age the likeness had never been very marked, for so far was William from overcoming wild boars in his sixth year that he was still mortally afraid of the domestic cat at the age of ten, and the sole result of his regular appearance in the hunting-field had only been to instil into him just sufficient knowledge and skill to enable him on most occasions to keep as far away from the dangerous quarry as possible.

But of all the fields in which William failed to emulate his father, in none were his short-comings so noticeable as in the tilt-yard. In this useful, and, indeed, in his station in life, essential accomplishment, he made no progress whatever. Finding it quite sufficiently difficult to retain his seat on a horse at all, he proved quite incapable of aiming his lance at a target at the same time. All was well so long as the horse was proceeding at walking pace—even when it started to trot he retained some control over his weapon—but the moment it broke into a canter all was lost. And so, William de Littlehampton had grown up, despite the careful instruction of innumerable riding-masters, the glorious example of his revered parent, the reproaches and sound wallopings of his

disappointed mother and the mockery of his contemporaries, quite unable to keep a Straight Lance.

One fine autumn evening shortly after William had reached his twentieth birthday he was sitting with his mother after dinner in an alcove in the great hall. The Dame had just firmly announced that she had long been wanting a serious talk with her only son and, as they were now quite alone, she proposed to take the opportunity. (The great hall at this hour was completely

deserted save for the presence of William's seven unmarried sisters, his cousins Leofric and Gertrude, half a dozen

varlets clearing away the dinner, two men-at-arms sharpening battle-axes in a corner, a wandering minstrel tuning his harp, and about a dozen wolfhounds doing nothing in particular.)

'William,' she said, raising her naturally powerful voice in order to be heard above the customary hush, 'you have now reached an age when it is essential that you should without delay accomplish some notable feat of arms in order to gain your position as a knight and bring honour to our house. If indeed,' she added in a nasty tone of voice, 'you have not already passed it. I will not waste time by once more pointing out to you how gravely you have disappointed my fondest hopes, or remarking how thankful I am that your poor father did not live to witness the inglorious career of his only son. I will only say that while we have done our best to conceal from the outside world the graver faults in your character, public opinion now demands that you should vindicate your claim to be the son of the great Sir Dagobert. Moreover, may I point out that even if you are dead to all sense of shame and unmoved by any other decent feelings, that you cannot possibly expect to marry your Cousin Gertrude until you have made some small effort to win for yourself a reputation?'

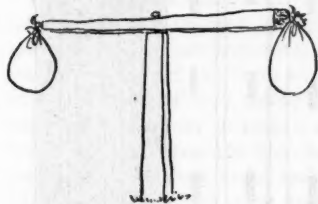
In point of fact William had not the slightest desire to marry his Cousin Gertrude, a bad-tempered girl with a face like a boot, but as both she and his mother had long ago decided that the match was a highly suitable one, he knew better than to attempt to protest.



How long the Dame would have continued to lecture her unfortunate son will never be known, for just as she was about to resume her list of his personal failings, the sound of a long blast upon the horn which hung on a post opposite the drawbridge fell upon their ears. It was a late hour for visitors and instantly there arose within the hall a great bustle and shouting of orders and hurrying to and fro. At last word came from the gatehouse that a solitary monk

sought admittance; whereupon the Dame gave orders that, provided the sentry was sure that the visitor was really alone, the drawbridge should be lowered.

A few moments later there strode into the hall none other than Abbot Slapjack, a robust and hearty clergyman, who had been the dear friend of the late



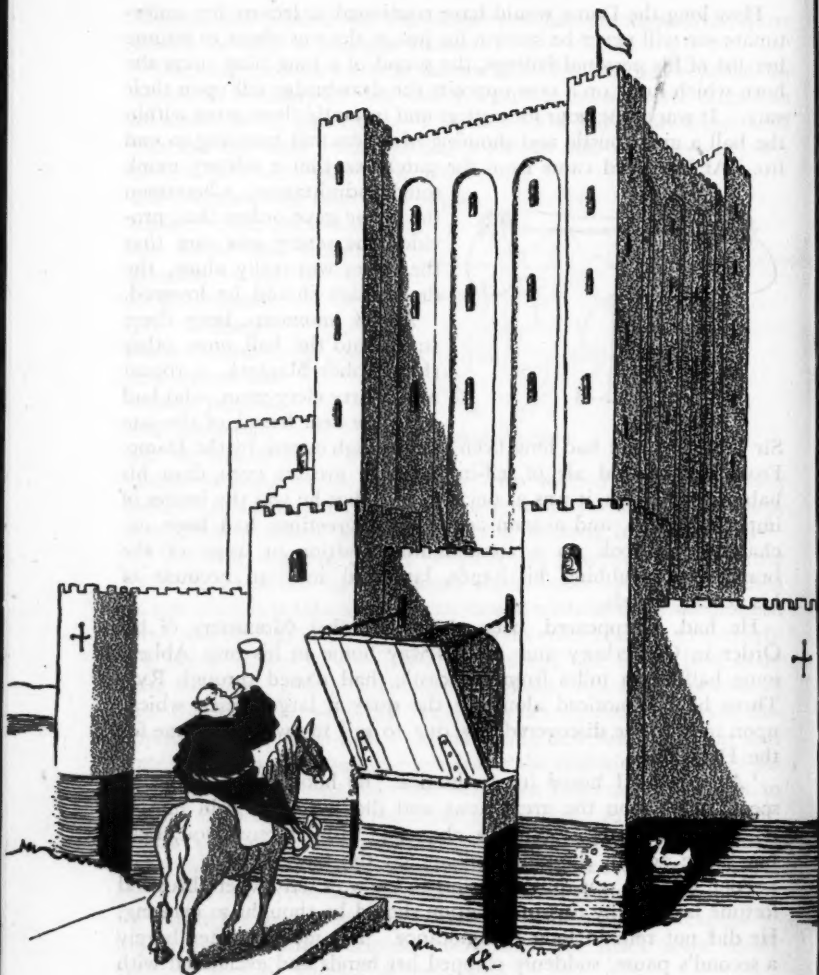
Sir Dagobert and had long been held in high esteem by the Dame. From his unusual air of self-importance, greater even than his habitual smugness, it was at once obvious that he was the bearer of important news, and as soon as the usual greetings had been exchanged, he took up a commanding position in front of the brazier and, rubbing his hands, launched into an account of his recent travels.

He had, it appeared, been visiting another Monastery of his Order in Canterbury and on his way home to his own Abbey, some half-dozen miles from the castle, had passed through Rye. There he had noticed alongside the quay a large vessel, which, upon inquiry, he discovered was due to sail in two days' time for the Holy Land.

'As soon as I heard its destination,' he boomed, 'I made all speed to tell you the great news and did not draw rein until I reached your gates. What a chance! How I envy you, dear boy!' he added, slapping William on the back.

Poor William was quite at a loss to know exactly where his good fortune lay or why this information should be thought so exciting. He did not remain long in ignorance. His mother, after barely a second's pause, suddenly clapped her hands and exclaimed with an enthusiasm fully equal to the Abbot's:

'Of course, the Crusade! Why,' she continued, 'we were only discussing this very moment what could be found for William to do. This is exactly the thing. Oh William, my son, what an opportunity.'



'Aha!' said the Abbot, 'I thought you would be pleased. 'Pon my word, if I were only twenty years younger I'd have gone straight off myself. This young rascal here'—slapping William again harder than ever—'has all the luck. However, there's no time to lose. The Master has consented to delay his sailing for forty-eight hours, but not a moment longer, so you will all have to set to and start packing right away.'

Poor William's heart sank. He knew very little about the Holy Land or about Crusades, but quite enough to be sure he was quite unsuited to such an enterprise. He would have first to cross the sea, which would certainly make him ill, and then there would be a great deal of hard riding, and it would undoubtedly be more important than ever to keep a straight lance. What little he had heard of the Saracens had been most unfavourable and there would probably be a lot of snakes, scorpions and possibly dragons. The only thing which gave him any pleasure was the fact that he understood the Holy Land to be very hot and after nineteen winters in Castle Courantsdair he felt he could stand a lot of heat.

However, he did not long have leisure for such gloomy brooding, as the Dame, acting with her usual promptitude on the Abbot's last words, had soon turned the whole castle into a hive of unaccustomed industry.

'Send me the Seneschal, the Head Groom, the Armourer, the Farrier, the Fletcher, and the Wardrobe mistress,' she roared; and as soon as these officials were lined up nervously before her chair she started issuing her orders.

'Seneschal,' she said, 'select at once two trusty men-at-arms to accompany your master on the Crusade, a personal servant and a groom. You, Master of the Horse, pick out the best charger in the stables, two good war-horses and half a dozen pack animals; the Farrier here will see that they are all properly shod and will get ready a sufficient supply of extra horse-shoes to last six months. Armourer, it will be your task carefully to examine your master's chain-mail, patch all holes and clean off any rust. Select and sharpen three swords, six lances and a battle-axe; pick out the best helmet in the armoury and polish it well; and look to the shields, touching up the paint work on the crest where necessary. Having done that, you will get ready complete equipment for two men-at-arms and a page. Meanwhile the Fletcher will prepare six gross of the best arrows, taking care to see that all the heads are properly pointed and that the moth has not got at the feathers.'

Having dismissed the parade the Dame then turned her attention to her seven daughters giggling with excitement in the corner.



'Now, girls,' she roared, 'stop all that tom-foolery and get out your needles and go at once to the sewing-room. The wardrobe mistress will provide a set of white surcoats on which it will be your proud privilege to sew the red cross of the Crusader. See to it that the stitches are small and you get the crosses on straight.'

'Well, well, that's capital,' said Abbot Slapjack, 'there's only one thing you have forgotten, dear lady.'

'What's that?' asked the Dame.

'Our gallant Crusader here will certainly need a page and I think I know who will want to volunteer.'

'Why of course—little Leofric.'

William groaned inwardly. Although of a kindly nature, if there was one person whom he could not stand at any price it was his Cousin Leofric. This repulsive youth was a noisy, snub-nosed, red-headed conceited lad some three years younger than himself, for whom his natural dislike had been much increased by the attitude of his family. For from his earliest years Leofric had been good at all the things at which poor William had been noticeably bad, and throughout their youth his excellence had invariably been made a matter of bitter reproach to the latter.

'Look at little Leofric,' the Dame would say, 'he doesn't cry when he falls off his rocking-horse,' or, 'Leofric is much younger than you are and see how good at single stick he is,' or, 'Leofric

doesn't make a fuss about bathing just because there's a little pack ice in the moat.'

Inevitably, as time went on, Leofric made less and less effort to conceal his contempt for his cousin, and nowadays seldom missed an opportunity of humiliating him. Indeed he sometimes went further and played horrid tricks on William, such as slipping a thistle beneath the saddle of his horse, tying up a wild boar in his bedroom, or lending him a joke lance which bent double when he was taking part in a tournament. It was not therefore surprising that the very last person William wanted to accompany him on the Crusade was Leofric. Nevertheless he clearly saw there was no way of preventing it. Leofric himself was delighted with the idea, and the Abbot and his mother were both clearly of the opinion that William ought to consider himself very lucky that so splendid a youth should have consented to go with him as a mere page.

But even worse was to follow.

'I say, Aunt,' said Leofric, 'of course we shall be taking Charlemagne, shan't we?'

Now Charlemagne was a large wolfhound with a fiendish temper, incredibly disobedient and horrible to look at. William, who was not very fond of dogs at any time, simply loathed him: but in vain did he protest that Charlemagne would never stand the heat, or would get stung by a viper, or catch rabies and that it would really be most unkind to take him. All such objections were swept aside by Leofric and it was generally decided that Charlemagne must certainly go too.

It was long past his usual bed-time when William got to his room that night. And even after he had lain down and blown out the rush-light he did not get to sleep. Through the open window came sounds of intense activity in the bailey below, hammers ringing on anvils, grooms shouting to men-at-arms, horses being shod, dogs barking, and drivers and servants running to and fro. Then, just as he was dropping off, in came the Dame to give him a dose, 'Just,' as she said, 'to be on the safe side.' And when finally he did get to sleep it seemed that he had barely closed his eyes before a hearty hammering at the door announced that dawn had broken and he must soon be off.

As soon as the family had finished a light breakfast of pickled pork, brisket of beef, soused herrings, bread, cheese and a hogshhead of ale, William was ceremoniously dressed. Leofric, as his page, assisted him into his suit of chain-mail, taking good care to pinch him and tweak him as much as he could during the process: his sisters slipped over his head a white surcoat chastely emblazoned

with the red cross of a Crusader : and finally his mother girded round his waist Sir Dagobert's favourite sword, the very one the hero had been wearing at the time of his tragic death, accompanying the gesture with a little speech in which she exhorted him always to be worthy of his dear papa and to the honoured name he bore, and ended up by telling him how lucky he should consider himself to be going on so delightful an expedition.

This done, William took leave of his mother, his sisters and his Cousin Gertrude, went out into the courtyard and, Leofric holding his bridle, mounted his grey mare, Lillian. (Luckily, the head groom was an old friend and had thwarted an attempt of Leofric's to substitute for the trustworthy Lillian a spirited charger of his own choosing.) Once safely in the saddle Leofric handed him his lance ; Abbot Slapjack, who had insisted on accompanying him to Rye (largely, William suspected, in order to see that he did not contrive to miss the boat), heaved himself on to his horse ; the men-at-arms drew up alongside ; the sentries all saluted ; the gatehouse keeper flung open the great gates ; the gatehouse keeper's wife burst into tears ; the gatehouse keeper's children yelled and waved ; the gatehouse keeper's dog nearly broke his chain from over-excitement ; and, having acknowledged the waves of his mother and his Cousin Gertrude from the battlements by raising his lance (his sisters had all been locked in their rooms by their mother who thought this final scene likely to prove too emotional for their refined temperaments), William rode off across the draw-bridge and over the downs, followed by a long string of pack animals and preceded by Charlemagne barking furiously.



'Pon my word you are in luck,' said Abbot Slapjack, 'I have never seen a finer ship in my life.'

William, who was standing beside him on the quay at Rye, did not really agree, but knew better than to say so. To him the good ship *St. Caradoc* seemed pitifully small, markedly uncomfortable and probably unseaworthy.

The Master was a bluff old sea-dog, smelling strongly of fish, who had already taken a great fancy to Leofric. But he was also

rather a snob and took much pleasure in the Littlehampton banner with the severed boar's head proper which was proudly flapping over the stern; this made him very polite to William. Everywhere he went he was accompanied by a one-eyed cockatoo which perched on his shoulder, and the ship's cat. This last was a ferocious-looking animal who would be unlikely, William rightly considered, to get on very well with Charlemagne.

At last the moment of departure arrived.

The two men-at-arms,

Wolfram and Tungsten, were already aboard: all the luggage had been safely stowed away in the hold; and Lillian was tied up uncomfortably somewhere amidships. (All the other horses had had to be sold as there was no room for them on board and would have to be replaced on arrival.)

'Well, my boy,' said Abbot Slapjack for the twentieth time, 'how I wish I were in your shoes. Do you know I have still a very good mind to come along too.'

'Oh no, please,' said William hastily, 'whatever would the Abbey do without you?'

'Ah, well, anno domini, anno domini,' replied the Abbot in a



self-pitying voice and wiped away a tear on the sleeve of his robe.

'God bless you,' he continued. 'God bless you, dear boy. How I wish——' But he got no further for at that moment Leofric, who had been in a frenzy of impatience to get started, dragged William up the gang-plank. Then, with a great deal of shouting, 'What Ho!' and 'Ahoy there!' and 'Avast ye!' the great sail was hoisted, the anchor was weighed, the rowers thrust out their oars, and they were away.

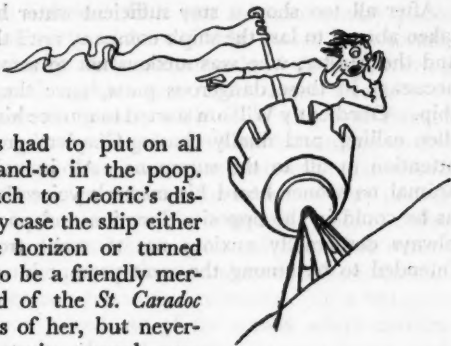
Over all the grisly details of that terrible voyage we will not linger. It will be sufficient if I tell you that William felt very queer long before the figure of the Abbot waving good-bye on the quay had passed out of sight, and had already been sea-sick twice before they were fairly in mid-channel. Charlemagne and the ship's cat had their first major difference of opinion before the ship had rounded the point and, by the time they were off the mouth of the Arun, William was far too ill even to accompany Leofric, who was feeling fine, up on to the poop to catch a last sight of the towers of Courantsdair just visible on the far ridge of the Downs.

According to the Master it was a quite singularly fortunate voyage, taking only five weeks from Rye to the Pillars of Hercules (as in his old-world way he called the Straits of Gibraltar), but for William it seemed more like five years of continuous tempest. His only comfort lay in the reflection that Charlemagne was enjoying it even less than he was. Whenever the unfortunate hound felt well enough to rampage round the deck he was set on at once by the ship's cat, who was always able to escape when pursued by leaping up the rigging, and whenever he was dropping off into a quiet doze he was immediately woken up by a stream of insults from the cockatoo. Leofric, I need hardly tell you, enjoyed every moment and was for ever climbing up to the crow's nest or taking a hand at the oars.

Once the *St. Caradoc* had passed through the Straits and was in the Mediterranean the weather improved; the sun came out; the sea was comparatively calm and William began to feel just a little more cheerful. But not for long.

Hitherto, the principal dangers which threatened them had been from the elements, but now an even more terrible peril arose. These waters were at that time infested by hordes of the most savage and ferocious corsairs and pirates whose appalling and bloodthirsty exploits the Master was never tired of recounting. Every time the look-out man in the crow's nest called out, 'Sail to Starboard!' (or 'Sail to Port!' as the case might be), all the

crew rushed for their bows and arrows, the decks were cleared for action, and William and the two men-at-arms had to put on all their armour and stand-to in the poop. In point of fact, much to Leofric's disappointment, in every case the ship either sheered off over the horizon or turned out, on closer view, to be a friendly merchantman as terrified of the *St. Caradoc* as the *St. Caradoc* was of her, but nevertheless the nervous strain proved very trying for William. The more so as Leofric was not above giving a false alarm just to see his cousin fall out of his hammock.



After they had been in the Mediterranean about a week, however, there occurred an incident which did do a little towards cheering up William. As they had not touched at any port since leaving the Bay of Biscay it had become necessary to take on some water, and as all the neighbouring harbours were in the hands of the Infidel they were forced to look out for some barren stretch of coast as far removed as possible from any habitation.

At last one morning the look-out announced that he had seen a likely looking place, a small group of palm trees in the midst of a completely deserted strip of shore, where they might safely land and it seemed probable that fresh water was to be found. Accordingly they drew towards the shore with a mariner perched astride the carved bird's head on the prow, dropping a plumb-line at intervals. When at length he decided the ship could safely go no farther everyone took off their breeches, slid down the oars and waded ashore.

Once more to feel the immobile earth beneath the feet was in itself a great pleasure to William, but in addition the long stretch of sandy beach, the palm-trees and the numerous cacti, which for him were a complete novelty, all combined to make the outing peculiarly delightful. There was, indeed, only one circumstance that in any way tended to mar his pleasure, and that was the behaviour of Charlemagne. Hardly less pleased than his master to find himself on *terra firma* the excitable creature raced madly up and down the beach, poking his nose into every patch of shrub and chasing all the sea-birds in sight, and William correctly foresaw considerable difficulty in persuading his notoriously disobedient hound to return to the ship when the time came.

After all too short a stay sufficient water had been found and taken aboard to last the ship's company until their next port of call and the Master, who was anxious not to remain longer than was necessary in these dangerous parts, gave the signal to return to ship. Obediently William started to retrace his steps, first whistling, then calling, and finally chasing Charlemagne, who had paid no attention at all to the summons. All in vain; the maddening animal no sooner heard his master's voice than he bolted as fast as he could in the opposite direction and poor William, who was always desperately anxious not to make trouble and had fully intended to be among the most prompt in obeying the Master's



call, was soon quite miserable with embarrassment and annoyance and had almost reconciled himself to leaving Charlemagne behind (which in fact only his kind-heartedness and understandable fear of what Leofric would say had prevented him doing straightaway), when a terrifying thing happened. Charlemagne, clearly visible, although as far from that section of the beach opposite the ship as he could get, was nosing round a clump of shrubs and cactus and deliberately paying no heed to his master's appeals. Suddenly there was a terrible roar, the bushes parted and there leapt out an enormous Numidian lion! Charlemagne gave one terrified squeak, leapt about six foot in the air, turning round as he did so (no easy feat), and bolted towards the ship as fast as he could. But not fast enough. The lion's first leap landed just short of the wretched animal himself, but not of his tail, which with one snap of its powerful jaws it severed at the roots.

At the first roar William, together with all those of the crew who still remained ashore, had made all haste they could to regain the ship and had the lion not stopped first to taste and then, almost immediately, to spit out his tail, Charlemagne's chances of survival

would have been slim indeed. As it was this momentary pause gave him just sufficient start and he was able, in one final bound, to leap from the water's edge on to the gunwale of the ship, leaving the Numidian lion gnashing his teeth on the sands below.

Although Charlemagne's beauty, such as it was, was forever spoiled, the adventure had not been without advantage to his character. From now on he came racing to heel at the first whistle and if ever he showed any signs of lingering or in any way getting out of hand, William had only to say in a meaning tone of voice, 'There's a good dog, and would he wag his tail then !' to reduce him at once to a state of unquestioning and shamefaced obedience.

The rest of the voyage was relatively uneventful. The sea continued calm ; they soon passed out of the waters where corsairs were particularly to be feared, and Charlemagne no longer had the heart to quarrel with the ship's cat and even learned to bear with exemplary patience the appalling behaviour of the cockatoo who made a practice, whenever he appeared, of imitating a lion's roar or calling out such remarks as 'Where's your tail, cocky?' or 'Any old lion, any old lion?'

In due course they came in sight of Cyprus, where they understood the King of England, together with his army, to be still encamped, and William's gloom at the prospect of meeting his comrades-in-arms returned in full force. However, on arrival they discovered that the English contingent had left some days earlier and was already in the Holy Land. William, although careful to express a lively disappointment in conversation with the Master and Leofric, was so much relieved that he was able quite to enjoy the two days they spent in port, which he employed in viewing the principal sights of Limmasol and buying some suitable mementoes to take back to his mother, Gertrude and his eleven sisters. However, this respite was but short and the *St. Caradoc* was soon once more at sea.

One morning five days later William was awakened by the joyful cry of Leofric, who in his enthusiasm had spent almost the whole time after leaving Cyprus aloft in the crow's-nest, announcing that at long last they were in sight of the Holy Land.

As they drew near the shore they could clearly distinguish a large encampment which, judging from the sounds of dogs barking, snatches of tuneless song, and hearty but rather coarse jokes, which floated across the water, they rightly concluded to shelter the English Army. In order that there might be no mistake, however, it was decided that Leofric should go ashore to make enquiries while William superintended the collection of the baggage on deck.

After about half an hour Leofric returned in high spirits. It was indeed the English Army, or a part of it, and they were most fortunate in the time of their arrival for to-morrow at dawn the whole force were to strike camp and march down the coast to join the main body which, under the command of the King himself, had gone ahead to lay siege to Acre. Leofric had already, so he joyfully declared, met many old friends and there was now nothing



to prevent them going ashore right away. William, who knew some of Leofric's old friends, tried to conceal his alarm and look properly pleased, and having taken a touching farewell of the Master (unnecessarily touching, William thought, remembering the high price they had had to pay for their fare), the whole party waded ashore and set out at once for the camp.

On arrival at the guard-house, Leofric, who appeared to have acquired quite an extraordinary amount of information in the short time he had spent ashore, gave the password and led William at once to the tent of the commanding officer. The Baron of Barking-West was a formidable old warrior with a complexion which was nearer puce than crimson and very prominent light blue eyes. He had been, it seemed, a com-

panion-in-arms of the late Sir Dagobert de Littlehampton and extended what appeared to be a cordial welcome to his son. Nevertheless William felt that only good breeding prevented him giving expression to a pained incredulity that his old friend could ever have sired so poor a fish as stood before him at this moment. Having been told that he was to be on parade at dawn to-morrow, at which hour the whole force was moving off on their three-day march to join the King, William was dismissed by the Baron, who instructed an orderly to conduct him to the mess.

When William entered the large tent which served as the Knights' mess, dinner was shortly to begin although as yet not all

the company were at table. In particular two knights were still standing up at the end farthest removed from the door as though awaiting his arrival. These William was horrified to recognise as two old acquaintances.

Sir Simon de Gatwick ('Gatters' to his numerous friends) and Sir Willibald de Wandsworth had been known to William since childhood through innumerable, and usually painful, encounters in the hunting field and at tournaments.

The first was a celebrated and highly popular sportsman of fine physique and proven courage. The second, hardly less esteemed, was celebrated for miles round his large estates on the North Downs for his ready wit, unconquerable cheerfulness and extraordinary talent for elaborate practical jokes. William, while admiring the energy of the one and the humour of the other, felt nothing approaching friendship for either and heartily wished that fortune had not thrown them together. Moreover, ever doubtful that his undistinguished appearance would prove familiar even to close friends, he was in two minds as to whether or not so popular and celebrated a pair would even remember him.

He need not have worried. No sooner was he fairly inside the tent when a roar of welcome greeted him.

'Well, well, look who's here!' bawled Sir Simon.

'Pon my soul if it isn't little Willy Littlehampton,' echoed Sir Willibald.

'Whoever would have thought of seeing *him* here,' in chorus.



Smiling nervously William advanced with hand politely outstretched, but unfortunately when he was half-way across the tent, all too conscious that all eyes were upon him, he was so unlucky as to trip over his sword (or rather Sir Dagobert's, and three sizes too large) and fall flat on his face. After a second's ghastly silence a great shout of laughter went up on all sides and poor William, blushing crimson, was picked up by Sir Willibald and brushed down just in time to take his place at table before the entry of the Baron.

But, alas, his humiliations were not yet at an end. Whether through nervousness, or due to the hearty slaps on the back with which he had been welcomed by Sir Simon, before ever he had had a mouthful to eat or drink, William developed the most fearful hiccups. In vain did he try to conceal his plight and avoid all conversation. The Baron, considering it his duty to make the son of his old friend feel at home on his first night, insisted on asking him a string of what he hoped were reassuring questions. How was his dear mother? Did he leave all his pretty sisters in good health? What sort of a harvest had they had in Sussex this year? To all these William did his best to reply.

'Very well—hic—thank you. It has been a—hic—good year for oats, but—hic—the barley has—hic hic—been too long in—hic—the ear. Ooop.'

His plight was now obvious to all and a wave of titters went round the tent. Sir Willibald de Wandsworth, however, in contrast to the rest of the company, seemed genuinely concerned, and insisted that the only cure was to drink a mugful of water straight down while holding the nose. He ordered his own page to fetch a mug and, when it was brought, most kindly held William's nose for him while he drank insisting that there must be no heel-taps. Gratefully William threw back his head and swallowed hard. The next moment he thought his end had come. His eyes bulged from their sockets; his mouth, throat and stomach seemed all suddenly to have burst into flame, and he was spluttering and gasping for breath like a drowning man. When at last he regained sufficient composure to notice what was happening around him, the whole of the company, including even the Baron, was in fits of laughter and Sir Willibald, who had filled the mug not with water but a colourless local drink called Arak, of incredible potency and fierceness, was being congratulated on all sides.

To what further indignities poor William might have been subjected, had not the Baron intervened, we shall never know. But in fact for the rest of the meal he was left in peace, and so exhausted

was he that not even an apple-pie bed which, he discovered on returning to his tent, had been made for him, nor even the couple of desert foxes which someone thoughtfully let loose under his tent-flap round about midnight, prevented him from at once sinking into a profound sleep.

Next morning, long before it was light, William, together with the rest of the camp, was aroused by a prolonged blowing of bugles and after a short but busy interval of dressing, packing and parading, he found himself, just as dawn was breaking, one of a long line of horsemen jogging southward across the rosy desert.



When the cavalcade of knights and men-at-arms had been riding for about three hours they came to a point where the desert track divided ; one branch swung away to the right ; the other continued straight on towards some low hills on the horizon. While the Baron was still consulting with his lieutenants as to which route to take there appeared a pair of pilgrims of a very holy but sadly scruffy appearance. Upon being questioned these venerable men assured the Baron that both tracks would lead them to the city of Acre, but advised strongly that they should take the one to the right although, when pressed, they readily admitted it was considerably longer.

'Why, O holy men,' asked the Baron, 'do you recommend us, who you must know to be anxious to rejoin our sovereign with all possible speed, to take the longer way?'

'O Lord,' replied the elder, holier and dirtier of the pair, 'were you to continue on the road ahead your path would lie directly beneath the walls of the castle of the fearful Almanazor-el-Babooni, whose ferocity, strength and insatiable appetite for Christian blood

have made his name a by-word throughout the East. No one has ever yet crossed that pass without his leave and come down on the other side alive.'

'O miserable, snivelling rogues; do you dare to suggest that fear of one contemptible Hottentot is likely to deter a company such as ours: that a force that includes such renowned warriors as the lords of Potters Bar, Tooting Bec, Bromley Common and East Grinstead, as well as innumerable knights of the highest reputation, can be diverted from their chosen route by old wives' tales such

as these? Do you dare to suppose that any man of us could ever again show his face in Earl's Court, or even Baron's Court, if we were to give a moment's heed to your craven warnings?'

'Hi there,' the Baron, by now deep purple with rage, called to some men-at-arms, 'seize these insolent scarecrows, and teach them the respect due to their betters.'

Whereupon two lusty fellows rushed at the unfortunate holy

men, belabouring them soundly with the flats of their swords, and continued this treatment until at last their victims ran bawling away down the hill. By the time they had rejoined their companions the little force was already some distance along the road which led to the mountains.

From now on until they reached the top of the pass the greatest excitement prevailed among the crusaders. It was generally agreed that the Baron had acted most properly in his summary rejection of the pilgrims' advice and the only doubt which was generally expressed was as to whether he had not been over-lenient in his treatment of the wretches and whether it might not have been better to have strung them up by the roadside with a short notice pinned round their necks recounting their crime by way of



warning to others who went about spreading alarm and despondency in this way.

The only person who did not fully share in the general confidence, you will not perhaps be surprised to hear, was William de Littlehampton. To him it seemed just possible that the Holy Men, who had obviously been a long time in this part of the world, might know what they were talking about. In particular he felt that his companions might possibly be underrating the Infidel tyrant whom, for his part, he was quite willing to believe every bit as formidable as he sounded. However, he knew enough to keep these unworthy doubts to himself.

Suddenly, less than an hour after the meeting with the pilgrims, a loud cry from the advance guard, who had reached the point where the road began to descend to the plain, brought the whole cavalcade to a halt. When William, who crowded forward with the others, reached the spot whence the cry had come, he saw immediately below a level stretch of country dominated by the walls and towers of a powerful castle in the Saracenic style. Immediately in front of its gates there was already drawn up what appeared to him to be an enormous host, their spears and scimitars flashing in the bright sunlight.

While the Baron and the more experienced knights, who had reined in their horses at the foot of the hill, were still discussing the best plan of campaign, a solitary horseman was observed to detach himself from the enemy ranks and come spurring across the intervening desert in a cloud of dust. When he had come within a hundred paces of the knights he pulled in his horse in a most dramatic manner, causing it to rear back on its haunches, and as soon as the dust had subsided was clearly seen to be a coal-black negro of gigantic size, grasping a huge banner richly embroidered with incomprehensible hieroglyphics. Before the crusaders had fully recovered from their surprise the blackamoor herald, for such he proved to be, called out in an enormous voice and quite passable French that he was the servant of the illustrious, all powerful, and most pious lord Almanazor-el-Babooni on whose territory they were now standing and who would suffer no Christian pig to remain alive for more than five minutes. So let them instantly begone! If, however, they were so foolish to persist in their purpose his unconquerable master would be delighted to meet as many knights as would care to come against him in single combat.

This challenge, I need hardly say, was at once accepted and while the herald was returning to his own lines to report, an eager dispute was carried on among all the knights as to who should have the

honour of dispatching this Infidel braggart. At length, further discussion was prevented by the Baron of Barking-West deciding that, dearly as he would himself have loved to teach the Infidels a good lesson, he felt that it would only be fair to the younger knights, who probably had hitherto had few opportunities to prove their worth, if one of them were selected for the task. He accordingly commanded that the challenge should be taken up by Sir Simon of Gatwick, than whom no one of his generation enjoyed a higher reputation. Instantly there was a flood of congratulations for Sir Simon, together with hearty slaps on the back and cries of 'Good Old Gatters,' 'Some people have all the luck,' 'You beat the daylight out of him, old man,' and such like, which was only brought to a close by the sight of the herald returning accompanied by another horseman who could only be the terrible Almanzor himself.

William, as soon as the pair had come clearly into view, felt that his worst fears had been well founded. El Babooni was a man of powerful physique with a great forked beard through which his sharp teeth gleamed like marble tombstones in an overgrown graveyard. On his head was a spiked golden helmet round which was bound a striped turban; in his left hand he held a small round shield, while with his right he whirled an enormous scimitar with what William felt to be a deceptive nonchalance.

However, his companions seemed in no way to share William's nervous fears. They remarked slightly on the size of the champion's steed, which indeed, compared with their own great cart-horses, looked small enough; they likened his shield to a saucepan lid; and his general appearance struck them as theatrical and flashy. It was generally felt, and by no one more strongly than that warrior himself, that Sir Simon would have a walk-over.

At length the last encouragements had been given and the saddle-girth finally adjusted and Sir Simon, having put on his great helm, taken his lance from his page and saluted the Baron, urged his horse forward towards the spot where the Infidel champion was impatiently awaiting him.

As Sir Simon, his shield held firmly across his body, his lance as straight and inflexible as a shaft of light, approached nearer his victim, his horse broke first into a trot, then into a canter and finally into a full gallop. El Babooni for his part never moved, and as his opponent came closer and closer all the spectators held their breath, wondering if he were mad. Then, just as it appeared that nothing could now prevent the point of Sir Simon's lance transfixing the insolent Paynim, El Babooni's little black horse seemed to shy

abruptly to the left, his little round shield shot out to catch and deflect the menacing spearhead and, as Sir Simon careered harmlessly by, with a seemingly careless sweep of his scimitar he severed the unfortunate knight's head neatly from his shoulders.



At first the Crusaders were too astonished to speak, but when the initial shock had subsided there broke out a flood of explanations and regrets: 'Poor old Gatters.' 'Dashed bad luck.' 'Why if that wretched little pony hadn't shied at the last moment that nigger would have been skewered as sure as eggs is eggs.'

Almost at once the question arose as to who was to have the honour of taking the place of poor Sir Simon and of avenging his death, but it was soon obvious that this honour belonged by right to his dearest friend, Sir Willibald de Wandsworth.

Once more after the last encouragements had been given and the saddle-girth finally adjusted, a Christian knight, having put on his great helm, taken his lance from his page and saluted the Baron, urged his horse towards the spot where the Infidel champion was impatiently awaiting him.

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their breath, wondering, though this time rather less hopefully, if he were mad. Then, just as it appeared that nothing could now prevent the point of Sir Willibald's lance transfixing the insolent Paynim, El Babooni's little black horse seemed to shy abruptly to the left, his little round shield shot out to catch and deflect the menacing spearhead and, as Sir Willibald careered harmlessly by, with an undoubtedly disdainful sweep of his mailed fist, not troubling to raise the scimitar which hung idle at his saddlebow, he caught the unfortunate knight a light clip under the jaw, lifting him clean out of the saddle and breaking his neck with the sound of a whip-crack.



This time the Crusaders were silent for much longer and when finally they had got over their astonishment, although their regrets were as sincerely expressed as before, their explanations were offered with rather a less confident ring. Moreover, the question of who next should take his place in the lists was not so easily to be decided, and had the Baron not firmly intervened the dispute might have gone on for some time.

'Men,' he said, 'I know that each one of you is burning with unquenchable eagerness to press forward and avenge your unfortunate companions. As there is now none among you who can justly be said to excel all others in martial virtues, I have decided that it would be fairest to all to draw lots. Thus you will all stand an equal chance of fulfilling the task which I know is closest to your hearts.'

Having thus spoken the Baron called to the Chaplain and borrowing from him a small piece of parchment carefully divided it with his knife into small slips equal in number to the knights present. These were then handed round by a page and, after each knight had written down his name (or, in rather a large number of cases, made his mark), were collected and placed in a helmet. The Baron, as soon as the helmet had been well shaken, closed his eyes tightly, put in his hand and drew forth a slip of parchment. With what keen, if suppressed, excitement did the company wait as the Baron fumblingly, for he had forgotten to remove his mailed gloves, unfolded the selected slip! How tensely did all hold their breath as they observed a look of surprise and then of humorous resignation pass across his face as he scanned the name! How completely they all failed to suppress a gasp, whether of astonishment or relief it would be hard to say, as at last in clear ringing tones he announced the name, 'William de Littlehampton!'

At first poor William could hardly believe his ears and then, as the full truth dawned on him, his head seemed to revolve rapidly on his shoulders and his stomach to start turning over inside him very, very slowly. When at length he had gained some little control over himself, he became aware of a chorus of hearty congratulations on his luck, in which, hazy as he was, he still thought he was able to distinguish a faint note of insincerity. Before, however, he could pause to consider this point his lance was being thrust into his hand by Leofric, his helm set firmly on his head by willing but unknown hands, and poor Lillian, who was hardly less nervous than he, was being urged forward to the point from which Sir Simon and Sir Willibald had started their ill-fated charges. As, obediently and seemingly without his direction, Lillian broke first into a trot, then into a canter, and finally into a gallop, William, thankful at least that his pale green face was hidden by his helm, repeated hopelessly to himself, 'Keep a straight lance, keep a straight lance, at all costs keep a straight lance.' Alas, even as he repeated these words he felt the point of his lance starting to move slowly from side to side and then up and down until it was behaving exactly like a weathercock on a gusty day. 'It's no good,' he thought, 'my end has come. If only I had tried harder and paid more attention to all those lessons in the tiltyard. But it's all too late!'

He was now within a few yards of El Babooni and, as he looked at that ferocious countenance drawing rapidly closer, the sight struck him as so appalling that he firmly resolved to close his eyes, never expecting to open them again in this world.

The next thing William knew, there was a crash so terrible that he was sure every bone in his body was shattered, and he felt himself flying through the air and bumped down with a force which set twinkling before his eyes a million stars which were almost at once extinguished by a wave of impenetrable blackness.

After what seemed to him to be several centuries William found himself sitting on the ground struggling to remove his helm which had apparently got twisted round in his fall. When he finally succeeded in getting it off, with what incredulous astonishment did he survey the scene that presented itself to his gaze! A dozen yards away lay the prostrate form of Almanzor-el-Babooni with the broken shaft of William's lance sticking up from the centre of his chest like a skewer in a partridge. Away in the distance a black horse was cantering terrified towards the horizon while, close at hand, Lillian was happily browsing on some cactus bushes. From the ranks of the Crusaders there rose a sound of prolonged cheering, while the negro herald was down on his knees swaying from side to side and wailing like a banshee.

After a few moments, for his wits were still a little bemused by his fall, he began to realise, that unlikely as it seemed, he must himself have been responsible in some mysterious way for the overthrow of El Babooni. Exactly how it had come about he was at a complete loss to explain.

What in fact had happened was this. Almanzor-el-Babooni had hitherto only been accustomed to giving battle to the most accomplished and highly trained Christian knights, such as Sir Simon and Sir Willibald, who invariably charged with a perfectly straight lance. When, therefore, he saw approaching a horseman whose lance, so far from being inflexibly straight, wavered from side to side, describing circles with its point, he was completely dumbfounded and his carefully acquired technique became of no avail. First he thrust out his little shield to the left, then to the right, and finally, too late, straight in front, muffed it and only succeeded in deflecting the point of William's lance into the exact centre of his own chest. Which all goes to show that it is seldom wise implicitly to trust the experts.

As soon as they saw the downfall of El Babooni and realised that he would never rise again all the Crusaders came crowding round the still dazed William, slapping him on the back, and wringing his hand. The Baron with tears in his eyes constantly repeated how much he wished his dear old friend Sir Dagobert had survived to witness the events of to-day, and repeatedly remarked what joy the news would give at Courantsdair. Natural and proper

as were the reactions of William's companions, the extraordinary performance of one bystander was completely unexpected. Much to the general surprise there came thrusting his way through the crowd of knights the gigantic negro herald, whose name strangely enough turned out to be Hercule, who, flinging himself full length on the ground, seized William's right foot and placed it on his own head, informing the company as he did so that he now considered himself the slave of the conqueror of El Babooni for life, and vowing that from henceforth he would never leave his side.

This touching scene might well have continued for some time had not the Baron called attention to the fact that although Almanazor himself had been dealt with, there still remained his army and his fortress. Accordingly he gave the order to mount and the whole body of knights, with the addition of Hercule, continued in line across the desert towards the enemy.

Any anxiety which the Crusaders may have felt at being faced with what was still a considerable force was soon dispelled by the behaviour of the Infidel host, who ever since they had realised that their leader was laid permanently low had been howling and yelling fit to burst. Now on seeing the approaching line of horsemen they broke and scattered in all directions, some galloping away towards the mountains as fast as they could and some flying back to the fortress, while others followed the example of Hercule and came rushing forward to throw their arms at the conqueror's feet.

On arriving at the great gates of the stronghold the Christians were surprised to find them open, and no single warrior prepared to make any resistance. Accordingly the Baron, having taken suitable precautions against ambush, and secured a number of hostages whom he caused Hercule to announce in Arabic would be immediately beheaded at the first sign of treachery, the whole force entered the city. Their first action was immediately to requisition the largest available palace, naturally El Babooni's, and as much food and drink as they could lay hands on. This done the Baron, having posted a full quota of sentries, dismissed the parade, announcing that all would assemble in the great court of the palace at seven o'clock sharp, when a magnificent banquet would be held to celebrate the happy events of the day.

That evening proved to be one of the most memorable in William's life. Having lived for the past two months on ship's biscuits and salt pork, he had looked forward eagerly to the banquet, but little dreamt how rich and varied the dishes would prove. There were lobsters cooked in wine, red mullets fried in butter,

lark pies, fricassee of nightingales' tongues, the tenderest kidneys wrapped in vine leaves and eaten on spits, young gazelles' trotters stewed in honey, mangoes, grapes, little figs, cakes made with almonds, and any amount of wine of all colours cooled with snow. But perhaps the most splendid dish of all was a roast flamingo stuffed with a whole turkey, which was stuffed with a whole goose, which was stuffed with a whole duck, which was stuffed with a whole chicken, which was stuffed with a whole partridge, which was stuffed with a whole quail, which was stuffed with a whole snipe, which was stuffed with a whole lark, which was stuffed with a whole nightingale, which was stuffed with a locust. None of the Crusaders had ever eaten such a meal before; but for William, whose mother had never approved of fancy, 'frenchified' dishes and had always insisted at Courantsdair on what she called 'good plain English cooking,' it was a revelation.

After they had all eaten so much they could no longer move, there took place a series of splendid and varied entertainments. There were dancers who whirled round so fast that their limbs seemed about to fly off; there were acrobats who balanced on the tips of their noses on spears; there were contortionists who tied their legs in knots behind their ears; there were jugglers who kept a dozen oranges, sixteen plates, any number of knives and a quantity of flaming torches all whirling through the air at the same time.

At last the Baron rose up and announced that as an early start would have to be made in the morning, all should now go to bed.

'However,' he concluded, 'before you depart there is one more toast which I would like to propose. Gentlemen, I give you the health of William de Little hampton!'



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